

The University of Chicago
Library



From the Estate
of
Mrs. Bernard I. Bell

IN THE CITY OF
CONFUSION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A CATHOLIC LOOKS AT HIS WORLD
HOLY WEEK

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

By
BERNARD IDDINGS BELL

THE CENTENARY PRESS
Two Manchester Square, London, W.1

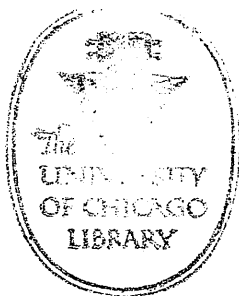
MADE AND PRINTED IN
GREAT BRITAIN BY
BUTLER AND TANNER LTD.
FROME AND LONDON

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1938

B1 50

1113

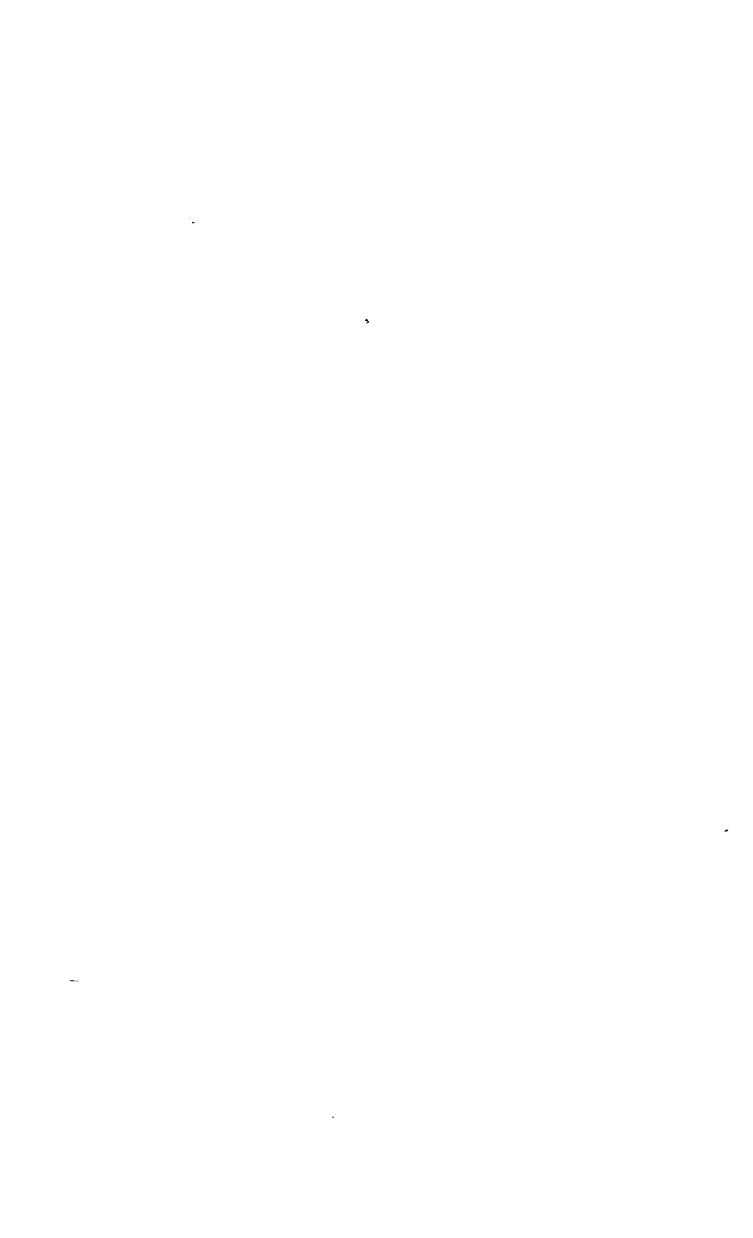
38



To
FLORENCE ELIZABETH McCURDY

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE PROPHECIES	9
I REFUSAL, REBELLION, RELIGION (<i>Ash Wednesday</i>)	15
II THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION (<i>The First Week</i>)	29
III THE WOUNDS OF GOD (<i>The Second Week</i>).	43
IV REDEMPTION (<i>The Third Week</i>)	57
V REFRESHMENT (<i>The Fourth Week</i>)	71
VI HAPPINESS (<i>Passion Week</i>)	89
VII NOTES OF THE PASSION (<i>Holy Week</i>)	107
1. Humility	107
2. Trustfulness	114
3. Joy	121
4. Peace	128
VIII BEHOLD THE MAN! (<i>Good Friday</i>)	135
THE FULFILMENT	149



THE PROPHECIES

THUS saith the Lord:

The City of Confusion is broken down. In the City is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction. When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, as the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done. They shall lift up their voice. They shall sing for the majesty of the Lord. They shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify the Lord in the fires.

But I said, My leanness! My leanness! Woe unto me! The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously, yea, very treacherously.

The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard. Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.¹

* * * * *

Alas, alas, the great City, Babylon, that mighty City! for in one hour is thy judgment come. The

¹ Isaiah xxiv. 10, 12-17.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; of thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory; all manner vessels of most costly wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense; and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat; and beasts, and sheep, and horses and chariots, and slaves, and *souls of men*. Alas, alas, that great City! for in one hour so great riches is come to nothing.¹

* * * * *

When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified, for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights; and great signs shall there be from heaven. In your patience, possess ye your souls. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.²

* * * * *

¹ Revelation xviii. 10-13, 16-17.

² St. Luke xxi. 9-11, 19, 28.

THE PROPHECIES

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did Peter testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.¹

* * * * *

And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.²

***H**^E that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

¹ Acts ii. 39-40.

² St. Luke xxii. 32.

I

REFUSAL, REBELLION, RELIGION

(Ash Wednesday)

I

REFUSAL, REBELLION, RELIGION

(*Ash Wednesday*)

WE have come once more to that season of self-discipline which our spiritual mother, the Church, guided in wisdom by God the Holy Ghost, each year provides for the good health of her children. The name of that season, "Lent", comes from the Old English word "lengten". It is the time of year when the days grow longer—in other words, the Spring. Lent begins at the last end of winter, when physical life is at its lowest ebb, when it seems that death has nature for ever in its cold grasp. Lent ends at the dawn of summer, when all the world once more is budding into life. It seemed to our Christian fathers that this progress from winter into the vernal season had a symbolic significance: that there was profit in the thought of a death of the body from which one might, perhaps, be redeemed to a new life in God. Christ rose from death to life, invincible, at the season when new *natural* life begins—at Pass-

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

over-time, which is always in late March or April. A Christian, therefore, takes the forty days preceding Passover-time and devotes them to such spiritual exercise as may help God to rescue him from that which is perishing, and to reanimate him with that which is indeed life-giving.

Appropriately, Lent begins with a day the solemn purpose of which is to remind us of the certainty of bodily death—"Ash" Wednesday, it is called. Formerly in every church of Christendom the faithful drew near—and to-day most of them still draw near—for the clergy to place upon each brow a little dust of ashes, with the words "Remember, O man, that dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return". Even where this ceremony is no longer physically performed, the name "*Ash* Wednesday" remains, to remind us of mortality.

In ever so short a time, my physical body will be but earth, and all that the body now owns and boasts—its appetites, its achievements, its possessions—will be for me as though they never had been. "Desire shall fail, because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets. Then shall the dust return to dust as it was. Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." Shall I live for wealth? It will soon have me no more for its possessor. Shall I

REFUSAL, REBELLION, RELIGION

accumulate property? No one can tell who will disperse it? Shall I live for appetite—for food or speed or sex? In a few short days, there will be no longer any sensitivity to carnal joys like these. Am I to live in terms of mastery over others? They whom I rule will soon cast the rubbish that awed them to the elements from which it came—dust to dust, ashes to ashes.

In the terms of those rewards for which most people live and labour, there is no end to my career except to be cast into the earth or burned to ignominious powder by those who will survive me. In terms of those rewards which most men are content to seek, I have no life that can endure. At length, and soon, all bodily striving, all physical possession, come alike to destruction. Do I call myself strong? I shall soon be weak. Or rich? I shall soon be poor. Well-clothed? I shall soon be naked. Do I hear ringing in my ears applause of men? There will soon be silence. Do people flatter me? Unnoticing, they soon will pass me by.

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate:
Death lays his icy hands on kings:

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor, crooked scythe and spade.¹

So said an English poet three hundred years ago; and only lately an American singer cried the same:

The dust blows up and down
Within the lonely town,
Vague, hurrying, dumb, aloof,
On sill and bough and roof.
What cloudy shapes do fleet
Along the parch-ed street!
Clerks, bishops, kings go by:
To-morrow—so shall I.²

“Remember, O man, that dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return!”

If I live in terms of the flesh, truly I shall die; but if in terms of the spirit I pass my earthly sojourn, I shall not perish.

There is hope for me if I do but struggle to justify myself as a spiritual being. This body must decay; and yet I may continue. Lord and Master of men, teach me, then, how to live, that in the end I may not come to mere futility.

Towards life only three attitudes are possible,

¹ James Shirley, *The Levelling Dust*.

² Lizette Woodworth Reese, *The Dust*.

REFUSAL, REBELLION, RELIGION

for me or for any man. The first is an attitude of Refusal; the second is an attitude of Rebellion; the third is an attitude of Religion. Refusal, Rebellion, Religion. Refusal ends in futility. Rebellion drives men and women into a demoniac madness. Religion sometimes makes them saints of glowing beauty; and always it can make them happy, very happy.

It is not easy to face the realities of human existence. Sometimes it seems that all our civilization has the nature of a conspiracy, designed to prevent a facing of the facts. Life, thanks to a multitude of accidental goods which in profusion it presents to men and women, seems so full of a number of things that we think that we all should be happy as kings, merely in terms of those things. There are pleasant possessions to work for and to own. There are careers to be made, applause to be gained, grandeur to achieve. There are pleasures of the mind's exploring, not to speak of pleasures of the senses, to be pursued with eagerness. In anticipation all these seem so completely satisfactory, so wholly worthwhile, that we find it easy not to look beyond them. We forget that "the years draw nigh when I shall say, I have no pleasure in them". If we do remember those years, we comfort ourselves by the assurance,

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

“When we are old, we shall have our memories.” But memories are not food upon which the soul can feast. No man is content to look backward. The urge of life, even for the oldest, is forward. Else, there is no urge at all. All things do indeed conspire to betray us, to help us to refuse to face the facts.

Even our loves, our lovers and our best-beloved, sometimes bemuse us. We come to depend too completely on them. They are precious, but not enough. Sometimes those dearest to us grow cold of heart, impatient. And death—death the inevitable—takes them from us one by one. To paraphrase Francis Thompson,

I turn me to them very wistfully;
But just as eyes grow sudden fair,
 With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucks them from me by the hair.¹

But such eventual disappointment is apt to seem unreal in advance of its coming; and so we expect too much of lovers and of children and of friends, of those in whom we are apt to place our all of hope. It is not merely things, then, but loves also, that make it easy for us to refuse to face life as it is.

And so we drift and meet no fundamental issues, and come at last to lean days and, with end of

¹ *The Hound of Heaven.*

REFUSAL, REBELLION, RELIGION

years, to nothing. Most men and women to-day are thus perilously drifting. Therein lies tragedy, perhaps the only real tragedy. The very young often seem happy enough; but middle age more than likely is bored. Too often one looks on the faces of old people who have never learned to live and so are dead men, dead women, walking about. Such macabre faces one might see in dreadful dreams, and tremble: not so much damned souls as dead souls—truly, horribly dead. Lord, save us from the fate of them who, in the face of life's challenge, prefer to live in Lotus-land.

But there are others who are too acute, too honest, too virile-minded, to follow the drifting multitude and make the great Refusal. They do face the facts. They see the shortness and uncertainty of human life, the ephemeral nature of pleasure, the folly of pride, the insecurity of love, the inevitable disappointment of ambition, the certainty of death of the body; and seeing these things, their attitude is one of Rebellion. With no faith in that which is invisible, and seeing in the visible nothing finally worth the having (since all must perish soon), they are beset by a great despair. In the grip of that despair, they become enemies of their brethren, and cursers of God. Yes, though often they deny that there is a

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

God, yet do they curse Him. That is the atheistic reaction.

There is a deal of pose that takes to itself the mighty name of atheism. It is not the easy-going cynics, however, that are properly called atheists. They are only sentimental pretenders to a great and unhappy status. Such people use their alleged atheism as a cloke for moral laziness, an excuse for avoiding issues. Do you wish to meet a *real* atheist? Read your Nietzsche. There is an honest man, a genuine atheist. There you see the rebel, who is more than half mad because he sees this life and no more. Or read Dostoievsky's *Letters from the Cellar*. Despair, that is the honest atheist's lot. Why study, when the mind that learns so soon must perish? Why work and struggle? Nothing comes of it. The atheistic hero (as we read in that heart-rending book of Dostoievsky's) "must pine in a lustful lethargy, silent, impotent, gnashing his teeth with the thought that there is not even any ground to be angry with anybody, that there is no cause for anything but only an artificial arrangement of facts, foul play, a muddle—and we cannot know what or who is the muddler. Bah! If only one were a fool, like most people, one could grow a pot-belly and a double-chin and be content." There is a smell

REFUSAL, REBELLION, RELIGION

of the madhouse in an atheism honest and complete.

The atheist rebels; and yet, because he will not surrender hope so long as any possible refuge from despair can be imagined, the atheist for awhile, perhaps, dreams of a future heaven to be created by unaided human power here on earth—as he dreams in Russia now, and elsewhere—a godless Paradise wherein all men shall be firmly regimented and well-fed and nicely housed, and therewith much content. He may achieve that Paradise, though I for one doubt it; but it will not satisfy him. His attainment will be, after all, only to have made all the more deadly the present sinking of the great majority into a pit of stuffy comfort, the easier their refusal to face the tremendous facts. *In that communistic Paradise, men will still die.* And honest atheists will therefore still cry, "This our commonwealth only soothes us with narcotic blessings. It is not enough, after all. Do you think we are blind fools all?" They who will not dodge the facts will in that day hate that communistic Paradise with a hatred greater than the hatred they ever bestowed on a bourgeois civilization. It will be no answer to life's problem, only a greater evasion of that problem. And then those deadlier revolvers will turn

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

their thoughts, with Nietzsche, to the dream of a ruthless superman, who by sheer force may tear his bloody way out of the ruck of tame humanity and rule, at least for his brief moment, as a god. Morality will mean nothing to that man. Pity will be a weakness, love a base surrender. He will insist that he must crash his brutal way to greatness, or at least to defiance. He will then be wholly insane.

But that will not happen to many men. It need not happen to anyone. Even when the time comes that we can no longer dodge death and all that implies—even then we need not surrender. Human life, in terms of this world alone, in the end means nothing, nothing at all; but there is more to life than the things of this world, sensibly perceived. Religion is the alternative—for an honest man that faces the facts, it is the only alternative—to Rebellion and Despair.

But by Religion we must not mean a hoping merely that when this too sad, and in itself futile, life is past, another and a better will begin. Nothing will begin at death; but there are things here and now to be had, life of a sort here and now possible to be lived, that death cannot destroy at all. "Eternal life," the Church calls it. We can live it here on earth. We must live it before we die, or we shall not have the chance to live it after we die. It is the truly

REFUSAL, REBELLION, RELIGION

real life, a life timeless, spaceless, independent of the accidents of earth.

It is a life lived with God Himself. Its chief treasure is God. Its centre of love is towards and from God. Its power and strength is of God. Its beginning and ending, its very essence, is God. "This is life eternal," says the Apostle, "to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent"—sent to reveal Him, to manifest Him. Eternal life is the life of those who are in the world, yet not of it because they are also living, here and now, in the other, the real, the deathless world. This present cosmos is not a madman's dream, as it seems to be if we look at it apart from God, but rather the outgoing of the mind and will of a Supreme Person. That Person loves, loves each one of us, each soul that here is beaten on by circumstance and, bruised but ever greater for the bruising, comes to spiritual maturity.

God lives our life. He comes to man. He hears our prayers and understands our piteous cry, though often he withholds from us the things we cry for, having nobler gifts to give. We may love Him. We may share his deep compassion as we reach out towards those others around us who in the school of life are learning—or it may be, not learning: to our lovers and beloved, our friends, our brethren; yes,

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

even to those who hurt us, those who kill. He is all that matters; and He does not fail, nor can death destroy the bond that unites us to Him. In Him we live and move and have our being. From Him neither sorrow nor tribulation nor any other creature can separate us; and with Him death has lost its terror. Therein lies joy, and courage.

Courage! How we need it, in this day when all those things are shaken wherein our fathers used to trust, when the old civilization is in process of dissolution and that which is to be is in travail of birth! We long to be of use to our brethren, to help to justice and peace and happiness a world most of whose people have lost their way and are bewildered. How can we serve if we are also bemused, if we are victims of the same misunderstanding of life that is ruining them? Surely we must first ourselves be saved from this untoward generation. We must not, like most of those round about, refuse to face the realities of life and death; nor dare we, in a mad rebellion, make company with those who cry "There is no king but Cæsar". Religion is our refuge, our only refuge—not a refuge from life's challenges but a refuge from despair and death. Convert us, Lord. Then we can strengthen the brethren.

II

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

(The First Week)

II

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

(*The First Week*)

CONVERT us, we plead. Convert us to what? Convert us to a religion that is broad, and deep, and high.

The three most fundamental words in the vocabulary of Religion are these: *Adoration*, *Compassion* and *Humility*. The first, *Adoration*, describes the proper attitude of man towards God; the second, *Compassion*, is the word for man's right attitude towards other people; the third, *Humility*, gives a key to the only realistic attitude towards one's self. Think for awhile about those three words.

Perhaps someone will feel like saying, "Why bother?" When one has stated that a religious man is one who adores God, has compassion towards his fellows, and is humble in respect to himself, nothing much remains to be said. Nevertheless, it may be well to think of them, at least for a little, chiefly be-

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

cause not too many people understand how inter-related, in any sane approach to life, are Adoration and Compassion and Humility. The three attitudes are all bound up together. A religious man does not at one time adore and at another have compassion and at still another feel humility, each separately and distinctly. They are, rather, the three dimensions of religion—its length, breath and thickness.

Nor does it much matter which dimension one considers first. One may begin with Adoration or with Humility or with Compassion. But the place where almost everyone actually does start, in approaching Religion to-day, is not with thought of God or with thought of one's self but with thought, rather, of the great company of human beings all round us: our neighbours, the nations, Society as a whole. The approach to Religion is easiest and most natural if we begin with *Compassion*.

Surely there can be few people who are not profoundly distressed by the state of the world: by the stress and strain and worry and fear that have taken most of the joy out of living; by threats of war, revolution, cruel destruction and even emergent savagery, that bid fair before long to drench the world in blood, blood shed to no purpose; by gross injustices in human society as now organized; by that

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

mad misadjustment of industry by which the many produce wealth which they never can own, while the few own wealth which they have not produced; by the economic folly which, in an endeavour to insure profits by an artificial maintenance of price-levels, insists on destroying wealth even while great sections of the population are underfed, badly housed, half-clothed; by flattering schemes of miseducation, such as serve to convince the ignorant that they are wise, the crude that they possess discrimination, and the low and mean that a noble self-restraint is pose, and high adventure laughable? Who does not shiver as he listens to the degraded inanities, the low and spiteful personalities, and the essential dishonesties, incidental to government? Who does not tremble as he reads the news from China and from Spain? Who does not quake with apprehension as he observes the piling up of competitive and insane armaments, nation against nation?

And surely most of us are distressed, too, by the shipwrecks made in the private lives of those about us, often of those near and dear to us: by drink, divorce, passion, greed, anger, craven surrenders. We see girls and boys whose loveliness warms the heart; and ten years later they have become gross and hard. The lips that spoke good words and kind, now

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

bite out cynicism and bitterness. So few there are who come to middle years and still can smile—except in scorn or self-pity; or reach old age in peace and charity.

Who can there be that does not feel distress of spirit at this, the world's distress?

But compassion is not the same thing as pity. Pity may be, and often is, extended to others by one who thinks himself superior to the ruck of men, and not himself in need of pity. Compassion is a thing less obvious and more noble than pity. The word "compassion" means "to suffer with", "to suffer alongside of". The man who has compassion understands that he, too, is a part of the great, sorry scheme of things; that he cannot by any plea avoid connection with it, and responsibility in view of it. He does not imitate that low beggar, Christopher Sly, who, in the Induction to the *Taming of the Shrew*, says, from his dirt and drink and degradation, "We Slys are no rogues. We came in with William the Conqueror. Let the world slide." Most of us cannot sit thus in the seat of the scornful and, unaware that we too are of the soiled majority, look down our aristocratic noses at the human family. Rather, perhaps—and it may be an equally unfortunate attitude—we feel like Hamlet. We know that the world is all awry and that we

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

have grave duties because of it; but so dreadfully difficult is the task of putting things in order again that with the Dane we cry, "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right."

Now of course Hamlet did not set anything right. All that happened in Denmark was that Hamlet went mad, and that made things worse than ever. Hamlet was not compassionate. He bewailed the sins of his adulterous mother and of the murderous king; but he had no realization that he was, in his own way, also a sinful and foolish person. He tried to set other people's lives in order, and failed because he did not see the necessity of setting his own life in order. He redeemed nothing, because he saw not the need of his own redemption. He did nothing but harm, because he thought himself sufficient to do good.

That brings us to remembrance of religion's *second* dimension. Compassion is ineffective unless there goes with it a real *Humility*. As long as we think ourselves exempt from sin and failure, as long as we are in our own minds better than other sinners, we are worse than useless.

How easy it is to repent of other people's sins! We, for instance, hold up horrified hands at the wickedness of Germany as ruled by Hitler; and the Ger-

mans are equally horrified at our wickedness! We are shocked by the rigour of Fascist discipline; and the Italians are shocked at what seems to them the trivial vulgarity and the essential hypocrisy of our British and American life. Or we are indignant at Russian Communism for its attack upon God; while the Bolsheviks are equally indignant at us for regarding religion or irreligion as of no great matter. They know that religion matters a very great deal. "It may be passionately espoused or passionately rejected", say they. "A man can give his life to it or else stamp it out as a curse. But in England and America you regard religion as of no moment, a private affair with no necessary social repercussions. What ignorant fools you are!" Of every nation it may well be said to-day: "Why seekest thou to pull the mote out of thy brother's eye, and perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Even so, also, we find capitalists waxing indignant over the selfish venality of working-men, and workers equally indignant over the venal selfishness of capitalists. To much of Park Avenue or Mayfair the Communists in Union Square or Whitechapel seem unspeakably wicked and anti-social; while those Communists spend their time denouncing the doings on Park Avenue and in Mayfair as heartless and tasteless vulgarity. Something

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

might be accomplished if each class repented *its own* sins for a while; but in that case there would have to be humility in all parts of the town—and there is next to no humility in any.

It takes a good deal of wisdom, more than most people seem to possess, to see that not one of us is good enough to help others to much goodness; to understand that we all are sinners, self-willed, stupid, blundering because we want to have our own way instead of to obey God's immutable laws for man. Experience ought to have taught us our limitations. Again and again you and I have tried to interfere in other people's lives, with the best possible intentions. How many times have we done any good by it? Often we have been a deal more harmful than helpful. Yet we keep on trying it, seeking to impose our benevolent compulsion for the rectifying of other people's mistakes. No man is competent to render that sort of service, for the simple reason that no man is able to order aright even his own life. He is too ignorant. He is too weak.

The religious man knows that very well indeed. He whose compassion has caused him to say, like the Psalmist, "Mine eyes gush out with water because men keep not Thy Law", is impelled by a necessary humility to cry, also like the Psalmist, "So foolish

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

am I, and ignorant. I am like a beast before Thee. My flesh and my heart fail me.”

When a man has felt compassion for the multitude and also knows his own sinfulness and inability, where is he to turn for help? What is there before us except incurable disaster, if indeed the world is all astray and if there is, neither in me nor in any other man, integrity, wisdom and strength sufficient to lead out of chaos into order, out of peril into safety and joy? So wise men have always wondered; and often, indeed, they have been tempted to despair: but the religious man, torn with compassion but with no illusion of self-righteousness, does find a way to safety and joy, the only way there is. There is the third dimension, *Adoration*. He finds his hope—for the salvation of himself, for the salvation of other people, for the salvation of Society—in God.

It is not man—not the sinful, selfish, silly human race—that rules the universe, or determines man's future. There is, rather, One who sits serene between the Cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet, One who inexorably controls all things, and that for good. Nor is the will of that God who governs, a thing unknown to us. During the long historical experimentation of man, by the flashes of insight that the prophets and poets and seers have had,

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

finally in the life and death by which He manifested Himself on earth: by all that, God has revealed His law for man. There is a law which governs the stars in their courses, and no star disobeys it. There is a law behind all organic life, and neither beast nor plant can disregard it. There is also a law for man. I can obey it, or for the moment disobey it; but I can no more defy it without ultimate disaster than can the stars or the lesser beasts. Man can will to obey, and by obeying find a life more beautiful because he *chooses* God's way, rather than is dumbly moved without his own co-operation. But if he chooses wrongly, man perishes at last, as all things must perish which defy the Law-giver. God reigns, even when man fails.

To them who do obey, and who repent their disobedience, there is peace, there is safety. Not safety in the sense that the wicked may not rise in might at any time and murder them who do God's will; but safety from having one's life end only in a tragic futility. "Fear not him that killeth the body," says Jesus, "and then can do no more. Fear him that can kill both body *and* soul. Yea, I say unto you, fear him." And not a peace that consists in an absence of all conflict or in mere pleasantness of circumstance. Peace, rather, in a knowing of oneness with That-

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

which-is, of unity between the creature and the Creator.

“Let me,” says the religious man, “adore and obey the God who is Eternal, who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of this phantasmagoria of a present world; and good will come. Let me repent me of my sins, appealing to His Divine Love to ransom me from slavery to a foolish, wicked self. It will not be that of myself I shall save the world or redeem my brethren. That costs more than I can give; and so I must let such a task alone forever. God alone can redeem. He can make *me* over. He can make *any man* over. He can make the *Society of men* over.”

Save us all, Lord, lest we perish. We seek no exemption from the common lot. We would suffer gladly with our brethren. We are humble, knowing our own sin. We adore Thine Eternal Being, Thy Rule and Power. Out of our pity for the world, burn Thou away conceit. Nor does our adoration come from desire to move Thy will to ours, but from necessity to mould our wills to Thine. Thy will be done, as in Heaven so with us on earth. Save, Lord, else we perish.

“All very nice and pious,” says the worldly man, “but so confoundedly impractical. We cannot wait

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGION

for God, or for the God-minded, to solve the imminent and pressing problems of the world. We are compelled to get busy and solve them ourselves, right away."

Very well. Very well. Let those who like the ever more apparent results of that way of dealing with things, go on and try it some more; but we who have faced life as it is, and who also have faced God, even a little, and sensed His Majesty and our frailty—we prefer rather to serve the Lord, as best we can, and *to trust in Him for man's salvation.*

Of course there must be action on our part, not mere passivity; but an action will do more good than harm unless that action comes from an earnest and humble contemplation of the will of God Himself. Our own bright ideas of what to do seem worse than useless. We therefore are not self-confident, as are the worldly. We cannot forget the words of Incarnate God: "Without me, ye can do nothing." Until men and women learn to go deep, to Him who is the ruling heart of things, there will be no joy, no peace, no safety.

A true religion must be three-dimensioned, with a width of compassion that embraces every man and woman and child on earth, and with a depth of honest, sane humility, and with a reaching upward

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

for salvation to no other than the law and will of God. I heard a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." He comes among us to receive our adoration, to give to us supernatural strength. And as He comes, His message remains what it has ever been: "Not by your force, nor by human power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Yes, Lord. Do Thou, then, save us, for we cannot save ourselves. Save us, even though it be by fire.

III

THE WOUNDS OF GOD

(The Second Week)

III

THE WOUNDS OF GOD

(The Second Week)

OUR FAILURE

“**S**AVE us, Lord, even though it be by fire.”
He can save us, from the world and from ourselves.

The world about us may think that we who are Christian men and women regard ourselves as competent to guide, to preach, to minister; but in reality we know quite well our weakness, our dullness of vision, our inadequacy either rightly to live for God or to help other men. We have no illusions about our self-sufficiency. We cannot save anyone. It is only God that can save. It is only God who, working in and through us—not through what we say or do so much as through what He helps us to become—who can save a world that has need of salvation. It is only He who can make the Church pure, without spot, sought out by men and women, a leaven. It is only He who can bring in the Kingdom of peace and

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

justice and righteousness. We are nothing unless, with our glad consent, He make us over into what He wishes us to be, into something—some faint but true image—of what He Himself is. We keep hoping and praying that He may do something to us, for us, in us, that for our brethren's sake we may become more wise, more simple, more humble, more effective.

We are right in having this expectation. He once took the Twelve, human beings as inadequate in themselves as we are, and made great souls out of them, fit to serve. Out of all of them, that is to say, except one, who, alas, was filled with such pride, such regard for money and place, such base ambition, as prevented even the Incarnate God from doing for him what was needed. God deliver us from that pride, from that love of applause and that longing for self-expression at all costs! God save us from the fate of Judas of Kerioth! All the others He made greatly helpful, men who found in Him and in His service such sureness, such peace and such joy as drew men to them and so to Him and so to all things right and true and good. And all through the centuries, ever since those first days, He has taken men and women who were as big fools as we, as half-hearted, as easily discouraged, as much tossed about

THE WOUNDS OF GOD

in a world too variously attractive (and yet essentially unsatisfying), and has done for them what was necessary. They were all in the beginning quite incompetent. In times of quiet retreat and meditation, in mystic moments at the Sacraments, He reached out to them, revealed Himself to them, revealed them to themselves, and so made them at last the better to understand both God and man. If He could do that for them, He can do it for us. Let us be bold to expect greatly, ask largely. There is no limit to His power to make us more His own. The only limitation lies in our own lack of realization of need, and in defective simplicity in our desire of Him.

Here are we, in the presence of Him without whom nothing is made that is made, without whose creative desire nothing exists that does exist, in the presence of Him who for love of men emptied Himself of glory and bore the limitations of our humanity, in the presence of Him who for love of men became incarnate and was virgin-born, in the presence of Him who suffered under Pilate and was crucified, in the presence of Him who rose triumphant over death. Adore Him and depend upon Him. Feel the outgoing of vibrant energy that flows from Him. It is the very energy that moves the distant stars and also, with a gentle firmness, brings into being every

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

tinest thing. He is God, imminent and transcendent. And as infinite as His power, so also is His compassion. Once, in this same way, He companied with Peter, James, John, Andrew, Mary His Mother. In this manner He dwelt with all them of old time who with faith drew near. In this manner He will be with them who will come after us, until the end of time.

“And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thy hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.”

It is not a complaint, this answer of God. He did not complain, in the days of His first labours here, merely because He was abandoned by them that had professed to love and follow Him. He did not complain when Peter cried out, “Though all men forsake Thee, yet will I never forsake Thee,” and then, before the cock crew, thrice denied Him. He did not complain when they all forsook Him and fled, and left Him to drink the cup of pain alone. Yet that forsaking of Him was the hardest blow He had to bear—worse than the scourging, more grievous than the mocking and the spit, harder to endure than the heavy cross under which He stumbled to Calvary, more painful than the nails, more heart-

THE WOUNDS OF GOD

rending than the agony and heat of the six long hours of dying. He loved those friends. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end"; and yet they fled for fear, and left Him alone to bear the burden of a failing world. "Can ye be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" He did not complain. He understood. "Can ye drink of the cup that I must drink?"

It was because He did not complain, it was because He understood, that those runaway disciples were filled with grief. "Jesus turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter went out and wept bitterly." So must they all have done. What must have been their feeling when, after He was risen, they met with Him again, not in momentary contacts in Jerusalem but more quietly, that time He ate the fish with them by the spring-time lake in Galilee? "Simon, do you love Me?" "Lord, you know all things. You know I love you." "Feed my sheep." "Then He showed them His hands and His feet," we read in another place. "He showed them His hands and His feet." "What are these wounds in Thy hands?" "Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." Then were the disciples glad, for they knew both the horror of that faithlessness which had been the crowning blow to their Saviour, and the

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

recreating force of His forgiveness. Nor did they ever forget, not even when the time had come for them in turn to lay down their lives, all but John in violent death and he in long years lived at bitter cost for love.

And now, in our turn, we ask of Him: "These wound prints in Thy hands, whence are they?" And He replies to us, "These are they wherewith I have been wounded in the house of you, who are My friends. For you I suffered. For you I died. I chose you for My own. You did not choose Me. I chose you for My company of them who are to love, to suffer, to redeem the lost world of weary men and women, to win them by lives laid down in a sacrifice like Mine, a sacrifice made not in the hope of human reward or gratitude, made because it is only so that men and women can be saved at all. I watched over you, led you, loved you, called you. At last you answered. Do you not then know My way, that it is the Way of a Cross? Have you not read that I promise to My own in this world tribulation? Have you not heard My saying: 'He that would come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me'? I was persuaded that perhaps you understood. 'What are these wounds?' you ask. These are they which you have given me by what you might have become,

THE WOUNDS OF GOD

what I expected you to be, and what you have not been."

He does not need to tell us, in particular, what it is that we have done in faithlessness to Him. We who are Christians are not judged by those standards by which others are judged. Shall we, who exalt the Eternal Victim, be other than glad co-sacrificers of self along with Him? That is what He commands. That is what He expects. In that we have not made full oblation of ourselves is the faithlessness that wounds His heart and makes us ineffective. A Christian by creed and worship offers sacrifice of Jesus. But the holiness of His Sacrificed Body and Blood is the thing that judges us if *all* that we sacrifice is Jesus. We must also sacrifice ourselves.

We may think that we *have* sacrificed ourselves, that our lot is one of poor pay and little of the world's applause. Let us beware of saying these things. There is a self-pity common among Christians that is at once their chief spiritual danger and the thing about them that most repels the unredeemed.

We say that we are poor? Even if it be true that we get less than other men, are we to talk to Jesus the Lord about our poverty? He had nowhere to lay His head, no home, no wife and children, no margin for amusement, no summer holidays, no food unless He

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

begged it. "Will you follow Me?" He asks. "Foxes have holes; birds have nests; I have nothing." We have no right, as Christians, to more than bare subsistence. And yet we complain. How that must disappoint and wound Him!

And do we have but little applause from men? As a matter of fact, as we all know, we are apt to be flattered and petted far more than is good for us. But suppose we are to some extent looked down on, laughed at, patronized, neglected, abused? Shall we complain in the presence of One who was cursed, beaten, jibed at, and left utterly alone to die for those who hated Him? We dare not try to fool ourselves, here, before Him. Rest assured we cannot fool Him.

The world hated Him; and by loving the world despite its rejection of Him, He made possible its salvation. The only thing that can redeem mankind is the compassion of them that love when they are rejected. That is the way He loves. That is the way in which He demands that we love. We have not done it. Not only have we not yet resisted, unto death, the unperceptive, secularized, selfish, ease-loving, spirit-neglecting world; we have not even with any sureness made it plain to that world that, while we love all men, even the worldly, indeed be-

THE WOUNDS OF GOD

cause we love them, we reject their wisdom and repudiate their standards.

The world looked on Jesus and knew with certainty that *He* rejected its wisdom and repudiated its standards. It was for that the worldly world crucified Him. Men and women saw Him love them from that Cross to which they nailed Him. Thus He was able to save them, to win them in spite of, indeed in a way because of, their rejection of Him. The world in all the ages since has looked on them who have been followers of Jesus. It has always despised them, except when it saw them rejecting its wisdom and standards and yet, for all of that rejection, still loving. When the world has found such Christians, it has been led by them to reconciliation both with the Eternal Deity and with one another. By such Christians the world has found its way towards salvation, for in their bodies such Christians have filled up that which was lacking in the sacrifice of Christ (as Paul says to the Ephesians). A worldly Christianity has always been a failing Christianity; a worldly Church has ever been a feeble Church.

But even unworldliness is not enough for Jesus, if by unworldliness one means a serene indifference to the world of selfish, struggling, carnal, secular people and, at the same time, a willingness to be supported

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

by such a world and to be complacently indulgent towards the leaders of such a world. By the Lord's command, His followers are not to be either worldly or merely unworldly. He is, and they are to be, anti-worldly: rejecting a secularized *ethos*, silently rebuking it, plainly warning it, often offending it (because such conduct and teaching is bound to cause offence), and rejected by it—yet loving it always, with a compassionate pity and a deep affection that nothing can destroy.

“Blessed are ye,” He says to us, “when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did they towards the *false* prophets which were before you.”

His message to us is a bidding to a true examination of conscience—not merely for the usual little sins to be deplored and confessed, but especially to discover faithlessness to Him in that eternal act of priesthood which involves the rejection of the world while yet we love and suffer for them within the world.

Is our religious life unsatisfying? Do the years

THE WOUNDS OF GOD

come on with more and more of fretful rebellion in our souls and less and less of radiant happiness? Does prayer become increasingly perfunctory? Are we less rather than more sure of Him in whom we put our trust than on that day we first acknowledged Him? Is all this not for the most part because we have been unwilling gladly, cheerfully, with embracing eagerness, to make plain to the world our rejection of its wisdom, our repudiation of its standards, and yet our great compassion? We have sought an easier way than Jesus's way. We have not been brave enough for Calvary. And so we have come to little, and the Kingdom waits, and the Lord's work is ill done; and men neither love us nor hate us, but simply overlook us. That would not matter much, their overlooking *us*, if it were not that, because we have been what we have been, they have not looked past us to *Him*.

In compassion and in patience, He understands us. But do we understand ourselves, both what we are and what we were meant to be? Do we understand what this religion of ours is all about, this religion that we have professed during the years now gone by, this religion whose symbol is a crucifix? He understands. Perfectly He understands. But do we?

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

“O Master, whence are these wounds in Thy hands?”

“These are they wherewith I have been wounded in the house of My friends.”

IV

REDEMPTION

(The Third Week)

IV

REDEMPTION

(The Third Week)

CHRISTIANITY is an approach towards God based upon three changeless convictions or, if the phrase be preferred, three adequate revelations: the first, about the nature of man; the second, about the nature of redemption; the third, about the way of life with God, possible only to man when he has been redeemed, which is the Church.

I

The Christian is sure that man is a creature divided within himself; with a something within him which bids him pursue, at any cost, truth, beauty and goodness, but with another something within him which drags him downward to the level of those lesser animals the determinant of whose lives is desire for food, drink, sleep, play and sex. These two tendencies, the Godward and the beastward, so contend within us that man is the most unreliable of

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

created beings. None can afford to trust his brethren very far. One dare not trust one's self. Man is perpetually surrendering to pressure of circumstance, and denying what he knows is right. In respect to any real knowledge of what constitutes the good life, beyond its most rudimentary beginnings, he is for the most part ignorant. The crude savage in him lies close below the surface of even the most apparently urbane culture. Only a tiny fraction of humanity has wisdom enough for spiritual leadership; and the crowd is quite as apt to turn and rend these competent and noble few, as it is to respect or follow them. Moreover, each generation must learn for itself the little it may learn of right living. The children will rarely accept what their fathers have discovered, by way of costly trial and error, until they too have tried and erred.

Men and women, in other words, are sinners. Sin is the deliberate refusal to surrender one's being to the will of God. Of all the creatures that are in heaven or earth, only human beings ever make that refusal, or indeed can make it. Every other thing, animate or inanimate, obeys without question the law made for its governance. The crystal obeys the law for crystals; the star obeys the law for stars; the chemical element obeys the laws for chemical ele-

REDEMPTION

ments; the hormone obeys the law for hormones; the corn obeys the law for corn; the dog obeys the law for dogs; the elephant obeys the laws for elephants; and so on. Each thing other than man fulfils, as a matter of course, its God-appointed destiny. Only man revolts. Only man denies the law of God, and does it even when he knows the law. God gave to us the precious gift of free will; but the condition necessarily inherent in the power of choice is that we may choose wrongly, and again and again we do. Our freedom, that highest of all God's gifts, is not a freedom to do with safety whatever we desire. We may choose, truly, but only as to whether we shall obey God and live, or revolt against God and perish. Just as the virtue of a freely chosen obedience makes possible for us a higher place in the eternal scheme of things than any compelled obedience could bestow, so is our condemnation and rejection the greater when we choose to disobey.

Woe to our brethren! Woe to you and me! Man has chosen wrongly. He has sinned against Heaven! Alone in God's universe, he has defied God, denied his destiny. And before us lies disaster—not some crude, burning hell such as those with small imagination have sometimes envisaged—but the deeper woe of being cast by God into His refuse-

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

heap, a people that has been tried and found wanting.

We shall not begin to have knowledge of ourselves or of Society until we see the peril we are in as a result of our refusal to obey God's will. Do we see it? Do we feel a horror of man's terrible condition? Or are we, like most of those around us, unwilling or unable to face the majesty and imperium of God? Are we, too, victims of that genial and groundless humanism which assumes that man fundamentally is quite all right, and with the passing years improving sufficiently to satisfy anybody, even the transcendent Deity?

Our Lord does not think that. He knows us better, He knows God better. "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, thou shalt be thrust down to hell.¹ I forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him which . . . hath power to cast into hell. Fear Him."² He who says these things is no harsh, cruel tyrant. These are the words of the loving but truth-telling Jesus. He warns us that, left to ourselves, choosing wrongly and exalting our own wills against that of the Eternal (as all of us do, and as our fathers did before us), we cut ourselves off from God—we do it, not He—and therefore are in danger of

¹ St. Luke x. 15.

² St. Mark xii. 5.

REDEMPTION

self-destruction. *The City of Confusion is the product of our sin.*

We human beings, potentially saintly but always in fact far from saintly, need help from other than ourselves, lest we all perish. Our dull humanity must be shown—shown by extra-human intervention—what the good life, the perfect life, may be. Even more we need an extra-human power, for the fortifying of weak wills, for the making of us into men and women strong enough to defy circumstance. Poor, unaided men are almost always foolish and often knaves—mutually destructive, self-destructive, beaten before they start. They need redemption.

That is what Christianity says about man, about you and me and our brethren in Society. It is not a flattering picture; but the same unflatteringly truthful things are said of man—of us—by the scientific psychologist and the competent historian. In fact, man has always known these truths about himself, except occasionally when he has indulged—(till he came to himself by way of disillusioning disaster)—in some sort of sentimental self-flattery. We are now emerging from such a period of human self-praise. Many people, complacently credulous, still are given to it—trusting in “education” and “democracy” and, “the pursuit of enlightened self-interest” to bring in

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

a perfect world, assuming that man is fundamentally good and ever getting better; but theirs is a faith that is only superstition. Most really modern people know that quite well. Civilization seems to such informed observers to be in disintegration. The thing that has failed is not social systems or political arrangements; the thing that has failed is man. This is an old story, as old as recorded history. Precisely such disaster as we see imminent is what the Christian faith says will surely happen unless man be redeemed by someone greater than himself.

The Christian concept of man as needing redemption is in accord with history, compatible with psychology, sound when examined in the light of the science of human behaviour. One Christian doctrine, the validity of which appears incontrovertible in the eyes of any competent historian, is the doctrine of original sin.

II

If we cannot of our own wisdom and strength either save ourselves as individuals or establish Society on a secure foundation, if only God can sufficiently redeem and transform our sin-warped being, then we must know what God is like and how to reach Him.

REDEMPTION

The Christian knows that God is such a one as we have seen, do see, in Jesus: that Jesus is not only the perfect man, but also the Infinite God revealing Himself in human terms. And what is the essential quality in this Jesus, who is God? Love: love which exerts itself for its own creative ends and for no extrinsic reward; love which is expended, not in hope of being loved back again, but simply because that is the way God acts.

In the first days of Christianity it was such love that men observed, superlatively revealed in Jesus. They saw Him live for loving, and die still loving. And then they found Him yet alive, a cosmic fact; and they adored Him. Such love as that wherewith He loved, could redeem, and did redeem. Looking on Him, they knew the good life, what it is; but more than that, they gained from that tireless love which He bestowed such power as gave them courage to face their own lives, not to be defeated by them, not to surrender to the animal within them, not to conform to the base pressures of a fallen world, but to be truly human and heroic. They put their trust in Him, their whole trust, and were not disappointed in their hope. In Him they knew God, and were saved by God. The unknown and unknowable Deity was no longer a strange Absolute, but a Father. And

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

from Jesus, too, there came a Presence indwelling, also God, a Spirit who made strong, and guided in perplexity, and gave peace in the midst of turmoil. The Father was God; Jesus was God; the Holy Ghost was God; yet were they not three Gods, but one God. No longer need one fear life's shifting sands. No longer need one put one's trust in princes, nor in any child of man. One put one's trust *in Him*, and found salvation from the evil world, the pull of flesh, the devil of conceit. So it was in the beginning, and so it may be with us to-day. We may with confidence take to Him the problem of man's insufficiency.

His answer is not to deny our honestly-discovered unworthiness; nor does He bid us rise from that deplorable state into which we have sunk, by virtue of our own sin-depleted power. Not at all. "He knows what is in man."¹

His answer is, rather, "Yes, my child. All that you say is true. Yet are you *not* condemned thereby, if so be that you put your trust in Me. You and your suffering brethren can be rescued. I can rescue you. I have made possible your redemption, your justification before the Eternal. I have obeyed; and behold, pardon is offered you by virtue of Me. God's

¹ St. John ii. 25.

REDEMPTION

love is so great that, if you accept it, 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' ” ¹

Let us therefore contemplate the glory of His redeeming love. By it, by it alone, man may be saved from everlasting destruction. As John says, “Thou hast redeemed us to God . . . and hast made us kings and priests.” ² As Paul writes to Titus, “The Grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared . . . who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us . . . These things speak.” ³ As Peter says, we “were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the precious blood of Christ . . . , being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God, who liveth and abideth for ever.” ⁴ “Look up,” says the Lord, “for your redemption draweth nigh.” ⁵ “He entered into the holy place,” writes the author of the letter to the Hebrews, “having obtained eternal redemption for us.” ⁶ “This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” ⁷

There is, then, that in God which redeems, re-

¹ Isaiah i. 18.

² Revelation v. 9-10.

³ Titus ii. 11, 14, 15.

⁴ 1 Peter i. 18, 19, 25.

⁵ St. Luke xxi. 28.

⁶ Hebrews ix. 12.

⁷ St. John iv. 42.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

stores, saves, as well as that which judges. We should never know that to be so, had not the Lord revealed it. What is this thing in God which redeems, restores, saves? It is His infinite compassion, extended to them who, though they have rejected Him and ruined themselves, at length know their desperate estate, and turn to Him.

III

The Church, even to the sight of the impercipient, is a fraternity of them that put their trust in the redeeming God revealed in and by Jesus. The Church, as they who see more clearly understand, is the mystical Body of which He is the Head and we are the members, in which from Him flows life and grace and peace and joy to them whom He redeems. But the Church, as the Saints have understood it, is far more even than that. We who are Christians are not merely the redeemed but also, with Him, co-redeemers of a world of men and women in need of redemption; not only the beloved but, in and with and by Him, also the lovers; not only recipients of strength but also, as a necessary part of the process of our own redemption, givers of strength to them that have it not. God grants us—greatest of all gifts—a share in the Divine enterprise,

REDEMPTION

the enterprise of loving men and women into righteousness.

It is great lovers, selfless lovers, undeterred by lack of appreciation, loving enough to bear the pain engendered by a world in travail, loving enough to be rejected of the impercipient multitude, loving enough to face their Crucifix without dismay: it is they who are the man-rebuilders, the character-creators, the saviours of a perishing world. That such lovers may be, God loves us all from Cross and Altar, a King, King of the lovers who ask not love again; and we who find no lesser power in which to put our trust cry out, "Lord, we believe, Help Thou our unbelief."

Because in all essentials man remains unchanged, in imperfection and in need, from generation to generation, even as God remains unchanged in His completeness, the fundamental cries of man to God are always the same in every civilization, every culture, every pertinent religion. Those cries of man to God are two: *Kyrie eleison*, and *Credo*. "Lord, have mercy," cried man in the ancient world, and still the man who knows himself is moved to cry the same. "*Kyrie eleison*. I am weak. I am ignorant. I am overwhelmed by life. Have compassion on me, Lord of pity and of power. *Kyrie eleison*." That is the

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

first cry; and the second rises inevitably out of it: "*Credo*. I believe. I put my trust in Thee, O God: not in myself, not in my weak, betraying brethren. To no lesser thing than Thee, O Holiest, can I entrust my life. Driven to Thee by what I have perceived of all things less than Thee, I cry aloud: *Credo! Credo!*"

It is these two cries that constitute the changeless appeal of man to God. And from Jesus, in our Christian worship and life, there come two answers: answers that satisfy, answers so penetrating that they may not be clothed in words but must, instead, be imparted in a silence of communion more adequate than any noble phrase. The first reply is *caritas*, God's love, love not in word alone but in deed and in truth, love from a Cross. It answers man's despairing plea more adequately than argument can answer it. That is the first of God's replies; and the second is as silent and sufficient as the first. It is the answer of His peace.

V

REFRESHMENT

(The Fourth Week)

V

REFRESHMENT

(The Fourth Week)

IN the difficult task of witnessing, before a world that does not believe, to the revelation of Jesus Christ about the meaning of life, both individual and social, we must, for our refreshment, from time to time have moments when the burden of the day may be forgotten and hungry minds and hearts be fed with the power of the Incarnate God Himself, when we worship Him without whom neither heaven nor earth is made, and in that adoration find new strength, new courage. During the long history of Christianity, Christian men and women have found this necessary recreation of the spirit best of all, and most simply of all, in Holy Communion. That greatest act of Christian worship has differed in detail of ceremonial, and in words, from age to age; and there are such differences now among the various communions; but in almost every liturgy, ancient or modern, there is to be found a central portion that in

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

substance is invariant: the Sanctus, the Blessing of the Elements and the act of Communion. Let us, for this fourth week in Lent, following, as it does, on what from time immemorial has been called "refreshment Sunday", think of these three elements that have been and are involved in this closest of all drawing near to God.

I

The earlier part of the liturgy is properly devoted to thought of human things: man's duty as prescribed in the moral law, the profession of man's faith, man's various labours noted in intercessory prayer, the confession of sins. Then suddenly the note changes. The officiant turns to the people, as one who would say, "Now come we to the thing that matters most." "Lift up your hearts," he cries; and the people reply, "We lift them up unto the Lord." "We should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name, evermore praising Thee and saying, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High." And as he

REFRESHMENT

says the words, the congregation are as little children, kneeling in the court of heaven, humble and happy, and at home.

Is it necessary for the glory of God—the glory of that Mind which conceives and, by the outgoing of its mental act, sustains all things and gives them being—is it required for the glory of such a One that we, who are only men and women, should laud Him and magnify His Holy Name? Is He who moves the deeps dependent on our little praise? Not at all. But the giving of that praise is necessary, indispensable, *for us*. It is we who are dependent on our adoration. When we truly magnify God, something strikes off the irons from self-imprisoned souls; we find freedom. Or, to change the metaphor, when we sing the Thrice-Holy Song we grow small, we lose ourselves; and that instant God reaches out and touches us, and we are found. Until that happens, unless it keeps on happening, we remain unlovely, and of no great use to God or man.

So it was with him who, in a moment of great spiritual experience, first heard the *Ter-Sanctus*. In the sixth chapter of Isaiah's prophecies we have the record of it.

"In the year that King Uzziah died," he writes, "I saw the Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim . . . and one kept crying to another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."

Now this Isaiah had been, up to that time, a conceited young person. He was a man of family, a man of innate ability. He had had the equivalent of what to-day is a post-graduate university education. He was one of the ruling, owning class. But like most such people—then and now—he had been filled with a sense of his own indispensable importance. He wished to do good. He was philanthropic. He was patriotic. He was altruistic. But he was proud! And then his king, Uzziah, died, after a reign of fifty years. And all the secularist prosperity which that Uzziah had laboured to bring to his nation seemed—and indeed was—as nothing; and the kingdom was in dangerous disarray, near to war and ruin. "Can man make any peace that lasts, or, indeed, do anything that matters?" thought Isaiah.

And then Isaiah saw the Lord! He saw with the eye of faith, more deeply piercing than the eye of flesh, Him who sits serene between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet. Man can do nothing

REFRESHMENT

worth the doing *if he does it of himself*. That is indeed true. Man strives and, in his folly and his weakness, fails; *but God does not fail*.

How hard it is for us modern Christians to realize the majesty of God, and our own nothingness apart from Him! We have been brought up from babyhood to think man a clever fellow and ourselves, in particular, competent people who, if we had half a chance, could set the world right in short order. Jesus says, "No. Apart from Me, you cannot do anything." We do not believe it.

Yet why should we not, we who live out our days in the City of Confusion? Have our modern achievements been so great? Speedily we are whirled from place to place; but to what end? Nobody knows. We have been taught an immense array of facts and techniques; but we have not seen their significance, and our minds are a vast perplexity. We have learned to read, but not to understand. We have large freedom in respect to sex and marriage, and it breaks more hearts than it cures. We know the horror of war, and tremble; yet we helplessly drift towards it and into it, neither we nor our statesmen able to avoid the ghastly thing. For a democracy that has degenerated into a vulgar plutocracy, our only attempted cure lies in the bigotry of

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

dictatorships, Fascist or Communist or Kemalist. Imminent battle, armament greed, big business and the dole, fustian palaces side by side with slums, surpluses and starvation. This is the world we have built without God, the world of which we were once so proud. Always there grows in us that ego-centredness which breeds hysteria.

“Woe is me that I am of unclean lips, and that I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips,” says the disillusioned young Isaiah. “There is no hope for man.” So we may feel inclined to say, as well.

Then comes the quiet of the Sanctus: the Lord high and lifted up, the silence of sure purpose, the pulsing of sane power. We do not know the way. He does. What He tells us to do, we shall do. He is all. We are nothing, except we live in and for and by Him. The world as it is may perish. It is more than likely, and that soon. He and His will are not to be thwarted by that. Man may destroy himself. He cannot thereby obstruct the purpose of the Eternal Mind. Man may shout, “There is no God.” God does not stop for that. Man may insist, “I do not need God. I will do as I please.” God is as gentle as He can be with fools; but it is folly that comes to an end, not He. Man may torture himself in sin; and then God comes to share the sin-born pain, on Cal-

REFRESHMENT

vary's hill, filled with a great, compassionate pity. To put myself in touch with Him by adoration, to know that I am nothing save in Him, to ask nothing for myself, expect nothing much from myself unaided, but give myself to Him instead, is a very practical procedure, full of most uncommon sense. It will make, maybe, a human being of me, and not a glittering fool. There is a glut of fools. The world has need of men and women.

II

Sublime though the Sanctus is, such adoration cannot be more than momentary. We may not here on earth enjoy for long the bliss of heaven. To quote Francis Thompson:

Ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity:
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.¹

The music of the angelic choirs, caught for one reassuring instant, fades from the ear, and there is silence. We cannot get to God, no matter how we try. We cannot get to God. May it be that God, knowing our need, will take our limitations on Him-

¹ *The Hound of Heaven.*

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

self, and come to us? The knowledge that God does indeed do that is at the very heart of the Christian religion. We move at once from Sanctus to Consecration.

Lord Jesus, in the way that He Himself appointed, comes to be with us, God-man with man. Our meeting-place becomes a court of Heaven, wherein we may dwell with Him, the Friend and King, and learn of Him once more what man is meant to be, and gain from Him new power. By contact with that Presence, our lives are rendered not merely endurable but worth the living.

In the Holy Communion the Lord Jesus meets his friends *humanly*. We, kneeling before Him, wishing for Him, imploring His strength, seeking His courage, know Him present. Then we get up from our knees and go out once again to face our lives. Those lives are always hard and puzzling. Frequently they are shot through with cruelty or pain or sorrow. In them lurks temptation: passion stains, folly dims our youth. Those lives remain in outward circumstance quite unchanged; but there is now a difference. We do not have to face them all alone.

He is our Sacrifice. In ancient times men felt that it must be possible to find something that could be given to God as earnest of man's repentance of his

REFRESHMENT

foolishness, wickedness, incompetence. They gave animals or first-fruits or money; but no formal sacrifice is really enough. Men came to know that after a while. The only adequate sacrifice is a perfect life laid down for God to use. But then none of our lives is perfect. It is that very fact that makes for sin and renders sacrifice essential. *Man must give what man cannot give.* To meet that inadequacy comes the Lord's sufficient help. He took our flesh upon Him and died for us, gave the world's one perfect human life and death, and gained thereby the right to impart to us such power as can make us to become more truly men and women. If only we could sacrifice ourselves! With Jesus' help, we can.

Do we feel our unworthiness, our ignorance, our weakness, our sin of nature and our sins of deed? Do we tremble at the way life comes to nothing with the passing of the years? There are some who say they feel no sense of sin. There may be those who really do feel none. But most of us know well enough the sins of thought and word and deed, the sins of omission and commission, the failures to be human, that mar our days. We try to hide those sins from ourselves, from other people, from God, hoping to persuade ourselves that we can escape judgment, the judgment of God written in our own hearts. We

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

cannot so escape! We know it, and tremble. We dare not face ourselves. We dare not face God. And for our succour, God does this amazing thing. He bears our guilt and dies for us, and for ever lifts His wounded hands, sufficient Sacrifice. We gaze with awe, we who are sinful men redeemed; and in our hearts the ancient words of the Prophet echo with old-new meaning: "All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; with His stripes we are healed. . . . Therefore is His portion with the great, because He has poured out His soul unto death."

"Behold the Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world!" He has mercy. He grants peace.

III

The Christian religion is that of a fellowship, a society dedicated to the doing of Christ's will, to the carrying out of His divine purpose. Christians are bound together into one Body by their allegiance

REFRESHMENT

to Him. Christendom is dependent upon geography. Its citizens are from every land on the globe. It is a people not restricted by race. In Him there is no Roman and no barbarian, no Aryan and no non-Aryan, no Oriental and no Occidental, no distinction of blood or colour. Nor is it a nation merely of the present day. It includes all who on earth in time past have done their work for Him, who at cost to themselves have borne witness to what He reveals of life, and who now, unhampered by the burden of the body, still do His will. Of that fellowship—or to use the Latin word, that “communion”—we all partake when we receive the Sacrament, the Body of the Lord.

Jesus' purpose is to sustain all them that work *in His Society of co-workers*, in that divine society which exists in the midst of those national and cultural structures that from time to time rise and flower and decay and perish and give way to others, which in their turn also rise and flower and decay and die. In the midst of this flux of human societies which, for lack of vision and because of man's selfishness, come to nothing, Jesus has planted His Church, to act as leaven in the midst of them, a Kingdom built on a concept of human life *as God desires it to be*, a Fellowship that never dies.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

Our lives as Christians are not meant to be easy lives. They who would live for nobler ends than the multitude pursues are sure to find themselves in opposition to that multitude, and, more often than not, hated and persecuted by it. That hard prospect should not bother overmuch those in the Fellowship, for it is better to suffer for and with that which is true and right and of God, and therefore can survive eternally, than to enjoy the plaudits and rewards of that which is destined ever to fail. But let us not minimize the difficulty. Christians have always had hard lives. As Lowell puts it in his poem, it is by the light of heroic witnesses that we trace the track of Jesus the King,

Toiling up new Calvaries ever
With the Cross that turns not back.

It is because of that aloneness, because we are a minority within a world gone wrong, that we have such mighty need for the Sacrament, "the Holy Communion", "the Holy Fellowship".

Communion, first of all, with *Him*. Where the faithful are gathered together, there is the King in the midst of them. He gives Himself to us—the Commander to His soldiers—to cheer us and encourage us and rest us and empower us.

REFRESHMENT

It is a breathing space in the battle. From various posts on the front, we make our way to the place of assembly. Some of us have been isolated picquets. Some come from stations of apparently endless inactivity, weary with waiting. Some have been fighting till they are exhausted. Some have been training difficult recruits. Others, still, have been engaged in singing the Lord's song in a strange land, their spirits homesick for the fatherland. Some have fought well and hard, and need to hear the Lord's "well done". Others have been faithless, playing with the enemy; but faithless though they may have been, these too know that only with the King is life and peace; and so, with shame and sorrow, they also come to the place of meeting. All these draw near; and the Master touches each one, passing among us, vibrant, vigorous, dynamic—giving power for the battle to them who have the burden of the day before them. This is the *rendezvous* of God!

It is not with the King alone that in our communions we have fellowship, but with the brethren, too. They strengthen us. We strengthen them. Nor is it only with them who kneel beside us, that we know unity. As the King touches us—in that fleeting moment at least—we realize how little Space, that figment of the human mind, actually matters. All

round the world are the brethren, holding up bodies and souls to the One Lord. Nor is the thralldom of mere Time, at least for that one instant, ours to endure. The myriads who have been on earth and now are not on earth, are with us in the Presence. My Christian mother, it may be, my friend whose body is long since in dust, the child that died, the holy saints; the dead and gone who won their way to true nobility, the dead and gone who tried but failed, and were forgiven: with them we have communion. In Christ Jesus all are united, past the sundering power of time or death.

This communion is not with safety possible for all men. It is not for cowards, for craven souls content with compromise. It is not for them that would sell the Lord for the pieces of silver. It is not for them that are conformed to the pattern of this world. It is for brave men, brave women, brave children, glad for God's sake to try to stand upright. These, be they ever so weak and ignorant, know at the altar—they and only they—what it means to be called into deathless fellowship. His Body and His Blood are for their food and drink, now and always. He is the source of their peace and courage. We that with them learn to endure as He endured, are conquerors and benefactors. In that great endurance, for Him

REFRESHMENT

and in Him, we are brethren, fed in the *Holy Fellowship*. Here is food for the wayfaring, for them who labour and are laden with the burden of their day.

Lord, evermore give us this Bread!

VI

HAPPINESS

(Passion Week)

VI

HAPPINESS

(Passion Week)

“**W**HEN they heard these things, they were filled with wrath and rose up and thrust Him out of the city and led Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong; but He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.”¹ Though they rose in wrath against Him, those orthodox and patriotic Nazarenes, and led Him to the hill to murder Him, His serenity was not disturbed. So strong it was, so sure He was, that no one dared to push Him over the precipice.

So it was always with Him, whatever threatened. “Never man spake as He spake,” said those dispatched to arrest Him, returning empty-handed. And the subtle informers, who came to entangle Him into dangerous admissions, were unable to proceed. It was not that His arguments were irresistible.

¹ St. Luke iv. 29-30.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

Often the replies made to His adversaries seem to us, and must have seemed to them, strangely inconclusive. It was not so much what He said that overcame them, as the way He said it. He was sure. Even when the time came that He must die, that sureness still remained. The soldiers in the garden were driven back by it, until He Himself bade them arrest Him. Pilate was puzzled by it, and afraid. The silence of Jesus under the beating, His silence on the way to Calvary, His silence on the Cross, was as great an evidence of imperturbability as ever His words had been. In death as in life, "passing through the midst of them, He went His way".

How different we are, in our passage through life! We show so little of composed certainty, so little of enduring assurance. We fret because we meet with opposition or indifference. We anxiously fight back, though all that comes of that is to increase the emotional drive of our opponents. Jesus was never worried, or over-eager. He seemed to know that truth would conquer, that opposition to it would come to nothing in the end. He was never in a hurry. He never counted on quick and easy results. Indeed, He does not seem to have concerned Himself at all about results. We always demand to see the harvest, and that without delay. We become fretful when,

HAPPINESS

the Gospel preached, it is not quickly accepted and followed; when, having loved a little, we find that men reject us and deride our sincerity. He was never fretful. That was what impelled men to heed Him; for acceptance or for rejection, at least to heed Him.

And yet there is no discouraging thing which we look upon that He did not also look upon. The world is much the same world, always. We are distressed beyond patience, perhaps, at the madness of a secularist civilization that does not consider any except this-worldly values; but there has never since been a civilization so completely secularized and this-worldly as the civilization that surrounded Him. We fret at the rise of a statism that makes a god of nationality and suppresses freedom; but the Roman Empire was a totalitarian state of a rigidity and cruelty such as makes even the worst modern despotism seem mild and gentle by comparison. We complain at the worldliness and superficiality and compromise of some who from high places would lead the Church astray; but their failure is as nothing compared with the venality and cynicism of those who in His day administered the religion of God's people. Such things as these could make Him weep, indeed; but it was for the rejectors that He wept. His tears were neither of annoyance nor of self-pity.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

Does it sometimes seem to us that to depend on love to conquer a world possessed by hate and ignorance and greed, is to play the fool? It seemed so in His day, to everyone but Him. Surely He was afflicted with our affliction. He lived, if ever one did, in the City of Confusion.

He remained serene in the midst thereof. We are anything but serene. What did He know that gave Him that sureness? What did He know, perfectly, which we too easily forget? He knew this: that governance is not in man's hands, but in those of God.

He knew that in the very Being of God, this God whose will is stronger than man's will, is Wisdom and Love. In the Holy Trinity these are "the eternal and perpetual relations of God with Himself in the abyss of His own infinite beatitude." And He knew this: that in becoming incarnate He was revealing and proclaiming that same infinite, and ultimately controlling, Wisdom and Love. Against that Wisdom and Love poor, sinful, foolish man revolts, and brings thereby upon himself great sorrow; but that rebellion, terrible though it is, does not in the least destroy the eternal reign of Him in whom is Wisdom and Love. The Cities of Confusion, built upon man's mutiny, have risen and flowered and decayed

HAPPINESS

and died, one after another, since the dawn of time; and until the end of time it will be so. The only hope for human souls is that they may be so won by God's own love for them that they will come gladly to a new obedience. He knew, only too well He knew it, that many, perhaps most of mankind, will shut their eyes even to redeeming love; but He knew equally well that in every generation there are those who will look and listen and love and be saved. Whether these be many or few, all the while God, in whom are Wisdom and Love, still rules the Heavens and the Earth. *God reigns because He loves;* and they who love reign with Him, undefeated, undefeatable.

This, then, He knew, and men listened to Him because He knew it: this we mostly forget, and therefore men heed us but little. It is only those who are seen themselves to have escaped, into sure serenity, from the mirage of man's love-rejecting mistake, to whom the world pays lasting or effective respect. Passing through the midst, these go their way; and though the world may cruelly misuse them, even unto death, it is they, and they alone, to whom the world in its heart of hearts gives honour. It is they to whom men listen—listen even when they cry aloud against them—since it is only they who are

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

seen to find the paths of earth not dreary roads to a sad and feared futility, but rather streets of Heaven along which, in great and simple happiness, human beings may walk with the Eternal. Such a one was Jesus, more than any man. Such a one is Jesus now.

But perhaps we say that it is easier for Jesus so completely to be serene, than it possibly can be for us. He is God, and we are only men. That is a thing easy to say, but not wholly true. He is God, yes; but He is also man. He shared completely the limitations of our human nature. Because of the reality of His manhood, He knew the temptation to doubt. In the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross, He knew. Nor is it wholly true that we are merely men. In response to His love, we can give to Him what little trust we do possess; and when we do, He pours out to us His grace, the free gift of His own great faith.

Faith is not merely a thing of our own weak devising. It is a gift from Incarnate God, to be prayed for, begged for. It is one gift that we may rightly beseech for ourselves. Riches, we who are Christians dare not ask, for He to whom we pray has none Himself, nor popularity, nor ease, nor length of life, nor freedom from pain and sorrow. What we may rightly ask is what He does indeed possess: faith. "If thou

canst believe," He says, "all things are possible to him that believes." "Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief."¹ "And the apostles said unto Him, Lord, increase our faith."² So must we also say.

We are men, weak and stumbling, of a faith too easily destroyed; but we are not men unaided. He can pour into us His own awareness of the majesty of God's prevailing love, the love that moves the stars, the love that brings to being things visible and invisible. All this He can bestow, and will, if in our need we ask it.

But serenity is, after all, a pallid virtue, unless to it be added a dynamic joy. Serenity may give birth to endurance and a patient smile; but joy engenders laughter. We must ask the Lord for more than calmness. He has more than that Himself. He comes to us as one filled with a dynamic happiness.

Too much, one single sentence in Deutero-Isaiah has been allowed to colour our picture of Him: "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" who "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows", "smitten of God, and afflicted".³ We forget that this, according to the prophet, was only the way that men esteemed Him, not at all the way He looked

¹ St. Mark ix. 23-24.

² St. Luke xvii. 5.

³ Isaiah liii. 3.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

upon Himself; nor do we remember that the prophecy goes on to a conclusion that is triumphant: "I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong."¹ Only the one phrase, "a man of sorrows", stays in our minds; the rest of that song of victory is forgotten. Our Lord is, indeed, One who bore the impact of sorrows thrust upon Him; but He bore them gladly and triumphantly. He was never a sorrowful man. The note of Him is joy; the note of His Gospel is joy; even the note of His passion (looking at it from His viewpoint, not that of them who crucified Him) is joy. And joy must be the thing that characterizes us, or we are none of His.

Joy is what an experienced man can possess only if he can look beyond the sadness, the pain, the passing of the years that lead to age and an apparent futility, and with the eye of faith lay hold upon Reality, upon God who cannot be defeated, upon that which does not pass away. The things that can be seen are temporal; and time, read by itself, spells death: but the things that cannot be seen are eternal, and he who has laid hold on them lives, no matter how the blows of circumstance may beat upon him, in a timeless glory wherein "the morning stars sing

¹ Isaiah liii. 12.

HAPPINESS

together and all the sons of God shout for joy".¹ Jesus had that sort of happiness. We must let Him give it to us.

"Sorrow" is a word rarely used in the Gospels. "Sorrow hath filled your heart," says Jesus, but adds at once, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."² The rich young man, indeed, was very sorrowful, but that was because he could not dare enough and so made the great refusal.³ Joseph and Mary sought Jesus, sorrowing;⁴ but Jesus asked them then, "*How* did you seek Me? *Sorrowing?*" That would never do. "There will be beginning of sorrows" only when a Godless world destroys itself in catastrophe.⁵ Jesus in Gethsemane found the Three "sleeping for sorrow". It greatly grieved Him. "Rise and pray," He bade them.⁶ In that garden He too felt sorrow beating down upon Him. "My soul," He said, "is very sorrowful, even unto death." But He knew that that sorrow was weakness and failure and temptation to sin. He wrestled with it and conquered it, so completely that when, a few hours later, He staggered down the street, carrying His cross to Golgotha, He could look up and say to the women of Jerusalem,

¹ Job xxxviii. 7.

² St. John xvi. 6, 20-22.

³ St. Luke xviii. 23-24.

⁴ Ibid., ii. 48.

⁵ St. Matthew xxiv. 8.

⁶ St. Luke xxii. 45-46.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

“Do not weep for Me.”¹ And those few times are literally the only references to sorrow in all the records of the Lord’s life and words.

But “joy”? The Gospels are full of the word, full of the thing. “I bring you glad tidings of great joy,” sang the Christmas shepherds.² “For joy he selleth all that he hath and buyeth the field” wherein is that great treasure, the Kingdom of Heaven.³ “The seventy returned again with joy.”⁴ “Your heart shall rejoice.”⁵ “Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”⁶ “These things speak I in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”⁷ “Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven.”⁸ “Rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven.”⁹ “If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice.”¹⁰ “In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit.”¹¹ “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.”¹² “It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again; was lost and is found.”¹³ “Let

¹ St. Luke xxiii. 10.

² Ibid, ii. 10.

³ St. Matthew xiii. 44.

⁴ St. Luke x. 17.

⁵ St. John xvi. 22.

⁶ Ibid., xvi. 24.

⁷ Ibid., xvii. 13.

⁸ St. Matthew v. 12.

⁹ St. Luke x. 20.

¹⁰ St. John xiv. 28.

¹¹ St. Luke x. 21.

¹² Ibid., x. 23.

¹³ Ibid., xv. 32.

not your heart be troubled.”¹ “Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.”² The whole Gospel story is of One whose joy no man could take away from Him.³

And after He was ascended into Heaven, it was joy that, in His holy religion, was bestowed on men. “There was great joy in that city” of Samaria, when Philip brought the new faith to its people.⁴ Paul and Barnabas, we read, came to Iconium, “filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost”.⁵ “The God of hope fill you with all joy,” Paul writes to the Romans.⁶ “The fruit of the Spirit,” he tells the Galatians, “is love, joy, peace.”⁷ “Rejoice with joy unspeakable,” writes Peter.⁸ And the lives of all the saints, in every century since those first days, show us that, because Christianity is true, it makes men and women happy, yes, even though all the externals of life may be terrifying and dreadful. The confessors sing for joy though men despise and mistreat them. The martyrs, following the example of Stephen, in their agony look up and see heaven opened; and the world, looking steadfastly upon them, sees their faces, as it were the faces of the angels.⁹

¹ St. John xiv. 1.

² Ibid., xx. 20.

³ Ibid., xvi. 22.

⁴ Acts viii. 8.

⁵ Ibid., xiii. 52.

⁶ Romans xv. 13.

⁷ Galatians v. 22.

⁸ 1 Peter i. 8.

⁹ Acts vi. 15.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

All the saints give silent echo to the song that Francis of Assisi sang. The Little Brother was worn out, one lonely night, worn out with too much labour and with longing of great love. He was blind and ill, lodged near St. Damian's in a wretched hut that was cold and wet and full of mice. "I will make a song of praise for all God's good creation," then he said. "O Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Sister Water, Brother Fire, Sister Earth, O creatures all, praise and bless my Lord, and be grateful, and serve Him with a deep humility." And when one asked how anybody could sing so bravely when in poverty and pain, the Poor Man answered: "I want what God wants. That is why I am so merry." Francis left our mortal sight seven centuries ago; but still because of joy he matters; still men and women ask his prayers; still they feel in Assisi a radiancy of laughter and of peace. "Lift up your hearts," the Church bids all men everywhere. How can we bid them so, unless we first have lifted up our own hearts, unless we hear, with angels and arch-angels and with all the company of heaven, how "laughter like a lion wakes to roar to the resounding plain"?¹ How can we help our downcast, sorrow-

¹ G. K. Chesterton's poem, "The House of Christmas".

burdened brethren, unless we first have tasted of the gaiety of God?

If we are truly Christian, there will flow from us, because we have gained it from the Lord of life Himself, an unquenchable happiness. True, we shall not be of that foolish sort which finds food for cheerfulness in the present state of the world. We shall not minimize the dreadfulness of human sin, with the misery which it has brought, and brings, to human souls and to Society. With the Lord, we shall weep over the City of Confusion, doomed to have not one stone left upon another, because it knows not the time of its visitation.¹ In the world we also must have tribulation, bear our share of the pain engendered by the world's blindness and self-seeking; but notwithstanding, we shall be of good cheer. He who is Master has overcome the world.² From the folly of man, we turn us to God's wisdom; from the weakness of man, we turn us to God's strength; from the sin of man, we turn us to God's righteousness; from the cruelty of man, we turn us to God's mercy.

If our sufficiency were of ourselves, we must needs be crushed and sad; but our sufficiency is not of man. He that is with us is stronger than all that fight against us. By Him who has made us His, we are more than

¹ St. Luke xix. 44.

² St. John xvi. 33.

conquerors. "For what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or the sword?" "Nay, I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." ¹

People gaze on us who call ourselves Christians, asking to see in us—if indeed our religion is true—God imparting joy to us, joy in us. Life crushes them. They look to us to see if perhaps God may have made of us souls unconquerable; but if they find us petty, or complaining, or given to a sense of personal defeat, they sadly turn away. If we are to be true followers of God, competent helpers of our brethren, we must let Jesus reveal in us a joy sufficient to make the drab world glow with colour, a joy such as fulfils the dreams men have when they are young. We can never win humanity to God by a gloomy gospel, nor by a gospel of mere endurance; only by a gospel of joy. They will listen to none but those who love God passionately and with delight, only to those who have a happiness that brings forth

¹ Romans viii. 35-39.

HAPPINESS

laughter, only to those whose freedom is born of gay and certain faith; for it is only such who have the thing that mankind longs for and, alas, has lost: the sense of radiant romance.

Remembering His serenity and joy, we go with Him to Calvary.

VII

THE NOTES OF THE PASSION

(Holy Week)

VII

THE NOTES OF THE PASSION

(Holy Week)

WE enter once more upon the Holy Week, the sacred seven days which begin with a tragic triumph and end in a triumphant tragedy. On the first four week-days, we need so to meditate as properly to prepare our minds and hearts for the Good Friday watch, when Jesus will reveal what God is like and what, with God's assistance, man can become.

There are four chief notes of the Passion and Death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; four attitudes which He had through all the week of rejection and suffering; four virtues which He can give to us who follow Him, if we will but ask for them with true desire.

I. THE NOTE OF HUMILITY (MONDAY)

Consider first of all that Jesus, our God and King, was content to live and die, in His humanity, one of

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

no great fame. When God became incarnate, He was not born in Cæsar's palace, but in a stable. He did not come into a rich man's household, but into that of a carpenter. He did not live in imperial Rome, the centre of the world, but in an obscure province of no repute; and even in that province He was not of the capital, Jerusalem, but of a petty country village, ill-esteemed. "Can any good," men asked, "come out of Nazareth?" He did not speak His profundities of wisdom to the scholars who crowded that famous university, the agora of Athens, "ever curious to hear and speak of some new thing". Rather He spoke to peasants and to other plain and simple people, slow to understand. When He came to die, it was not like some noble martyr that He was killed, in honour suited to the great, nor like Socrates, who drank the hemlock after goodly converse with his learned friends. Friendless, despised, Jesus perished by the Cross, whereon none but the lowest riff-raff of the Empire might be executed. It is impossible to imagine one who lived, in terms of circumstance, a less distinguished life than Jesus Christ.

Yet in the centuries since that first Holy Week, the greatest kings have knelt in adoration before Him, the wisest scholars have bowed down their minds to

NOTES OF THE PASSION

do Him honour; the noblest poets, artists and musicians have used their highest skill to praise His majesty. One recalls the words which were said of Him by Napoleon the Great in his latter days at St. Helena, recalls them not because Bonaparte was a man much to be admired, but because his sentences so well express what the mighty ones of earth frequently and deeply have felt. Napoleon, that least lowly of men, that least Christ-like of men, he who had been Marshal of the Grand Army, Emperor of the French, loved or feared by half the world, spake of the greater Lord, and said:

“There is but One Name in the whole world that lives; the Name of One who passed His years in obscurity and died a malefactor’s death. It has possessed the world and it maintains possession. Amid the most varied nations, under the most diversified circumstances, in the most cultivated and in the rudest races and intellects, in all classes of society, the Owner of that great Name reigns. High and low acknowledge Him; millions of souls to-day are conversing with Him, are venturing on His word, are looking for His Presence. Palaces—sumptuous, innumerable—are raised in His honour. His image, as it was in the hour of his deepest humiliation, is displayed in the proud city, in the open country, on the

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

tops of mountains. It sanctifies the hall, the closet, the bed-chamber. It is a subject for the exercise of the highest genius in the imitative arts. In life it is worn next the heart; it is held before the failing eyes in death. Here, then, is one who is not a mere name, a mere fiction, but a reality. He is dead and gone; but still He lives—the energetic thought of successive generations, the motive power of a thousand great events. He has done without effort what others with lifelong activities have been unable to do. Who is He but the King who is Creator—sovereign over His own works, towards whom our eyes turn instinctively because He is our Master and our God?" And again this same Napoleon said of Jesus: "I know men. This was something more than man."¹

What is it that has made the humble Christ so awe-compelling, so love-inspiring? Why is He who had no wealth, no armies, no distinction of honour, called King of kings and Lord of lords? Because He lived our common life supremely well. Greatest He was, and is, for in Him the commonplace became significant. Let us look this week on Calvary with that thought in mind. Again He walks before our eyes, talks to us, with and for us faces all of life and tastes

¹ Quoted by Alfred Noyes, *The Unknown God*, pp. 314-15.

NOTES OF THE PASSION

of death, with a greatness that might be ours if only we cared and dared. Let us say to ourselves: "Jesus is I as I am meant to be, as I can be if I am willing to be God-possessed. I am simple, of lowly and obscure place. So was Jesus. No man cares greatly what I say or do. That was true of Jesus. I never seem to accomplish anything. Neither did He. He did the little things with perfectness; and that is genius. That is God-like. So He lived. So He asks me to try to live. So at last He died, and die right soon shall I. Let me live my little life, obscure, forgotten, if only by His grace I may do what I am called upon to do with something of His perfectness." Worldly position, applause, they do not matter much in the light of Him. How humble is the station of the One whom men adore!

Consider also the *source* of His content with small position in the eyes of men. His human littleness troubled Him not at all, because He plainly saw God's greatness. In radiant vision of the Eternal, He was content to be obedient. His humanity was an instrument in the hands of that Divinity who shapes our ends to His good purpose. St. Paul said once, in writing to the Corinthians,¹ "It is a very small thing with me that I should be judged of man's

¹ 1 Corinthians iv. 5.

judgment—nay, I judge not mine own self: He that judgeth me is the Lord.” What Paul felt in relation to Jesus, Jesus felt supremely towards His Father. He was not swayed in the least by whether men loved or hated Him, thanked Him or cursed Him, shouted “Hosanna!” or “Crucify!”, led Him in triumph to the Temple or in rejection to Golgotha. These popular reactions did not matter overmuch.

To be hated hurt Him, of course; and agony of body was agony to Him, as it is to all men. In the garden, His horror and dread of the coming Cross were such that there ran down His face sweat, as it had been great drops of blood. “Let this cup pass from Me, if it be possible,” He prayed, and meant it. “Nevertheless, Thy Will be done.” He hated pain, yes; but He feared not them whose instrument pain was. “Wist ye not,” He had asked His Mother and St. Joseph, when He was only twelve years old,—“wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” To do the will of God, to obey the creative will of the Eternal, that was why He was on earth. To pursue the Father’s business, to bear witness for truth against lies, to pit love against hate, to maintain integrity against low compromise—all these meant scorn, and torture and anguish of the body, and

NOTES OF THE PASSION

death when He was in the foremost vigour of His manhood. But the work must be done. His own human desire, even His own self-approval, mattered not. The world's compulsions mattered not. His was a bitter road; but it was the divinely right road, the only road to be followed consistent with His destiny. He was content to risk all on God, for God was all that counted. As a matter of course He would say, when the agony was done, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." He had said that all the week. He had said that all His life.

That is humility indeed. Humility does not consist in self-depreciation. Jesus did not underestimate Himself. "Before Abraham was, I am," said He. "I am the Resurrection and the Life." "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." "The heavens and the earth will pass away; but My words shall not pass away." Those are not the utterances of a morbid or hypercritical self-disparagement. He understood His own ability, His power; accepted them as given things, as facts not to be denied. But to Him they were as nothing beside the reality of the Eternal from whom they came. "I and My Father are One," said He, but also, "My Father is greater than I." He understood Himself aright—and then forgot Himself. That was humility in very fact, humility so

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

glorious that in the presence of it pride seems tinsel, worldly glory but a tawdry show.

And we? Have we in our souls, or have we shown in our lives, anything of this Christ-like humility which makes men mighty, the humility of one who, knowing his own worth and power, forgets himself to do the will of God? Dull and self-centred we have been, afraid of human disapproval, nervously seeking applause, fearful lest we be unwelcomed by the crowd. How base a thing it is to live for such small ends! How redolent of small conceit! How cowardly a thing is pride! What matters fame, when God Himself cares nothing for it? Our pride, it is a chain about our neck and shackles at our feet.

Look on Lord Jesus in this Holy Week. His greatness lies in His humility. So might ours lie! So may ours lie! God grant it!

2. THE NOTE OF TRUSTFULNESS (TUESDAY)

Yesterday we thought of the first note of the Passion of the Lord, the note of humility: a humility by virtue of which Jesus, the Incarnate God, regards not at all the fickle judgment, the bribes or threats of those about Him; a humility which leads not to disparagement of self-recognized abilities, but rather

to a complete forgetfulness of self-will. But humility is not in itself enough. Humility is a negative thing—the negation of pride, the negation of self-regard. To-day, let us turn our thoughts from that negation to the positive force which made Jesus' self-forgetfulness fruitful and compelling. That positive and releasing factor—in His whole life and particularly in the Passion—was His enthusiastic and complete trustfulness.

"Trustfulness" is, perhaps, a better word for it than "faith" or "belief", for the simple reason that "faith" and "belief" are terms too generally misunderstood in the contemporary world. It is interesting to note, by way of correction of possible misconceptions, in what sense the word "belief" is used in the New Testament. Never in those pages does it mean a merely intellectual assent. It is the translation of a Greek word which means "I put my trust in". When a Christian says "I believe in God" he does not mean "I believe that there is a God." He means, instead, "I put my confidence in God." "I risk all that I am and have on God"—in the same way, exactly, that to say "I believe in my son" does not mean "I am of the opinion that I have a son", but rather, "I trust my son." What a thing it is to hear a man say, "I believe in So-and-so. He is my

friend, and I believe in him." Similarly, what a thing it is to hear a congregation of Christians say the Creed, when once we understand the significance of its initial words—to hear them say as one man, "I put my trust in God. I put my trust in the one Master, Jesus the King. I put my trust in the Holy Ghost. I place my confidence in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, ready to live and die in it and for it."

The man who puts his trust in God does not thereby come, necessarily, to understand all about the world and its mysteries, all about man and his life. The believer may be, often is, an ignorant, groping creature, much in the position of a little child who is afraid of the dark. In his fright such a child calls out "Father!" and to his bedside comes that father, to find the child a-tremble. "O father," cries the lad, "I am afraid of what may be hidden in the shadows." "Everything is all right," replies the father. "Nothing will hurt you. I am near by. Do not be afraid." When the father withdraws, the child, to be sure, still does not understand the dreadful dark; but nevertheless he relaxes frightened nerves. He does not understand; but he knows that his father does understand, and he trusts his father. He believes in him. Or, to change the simile, he who believes in

God is like a neophyte at mountain-climbing, creeping up the icy precipice towards some great summit. Looking down, he trembles to behold how far from safety he has come. Looking up, he deems the completed ascent a thing impossible. If he were alone, his heart would fail him for fear and he would drop in dizziness to death. But he has roped himself to an old, experienced guide. With heart in mouth he climbs on, step by step, because he trusts that guide, believes in that guide; and so at last he sets his foot upon the highest peak, and surveys the panorama of an outstretched world.

It is precisely that sort of faith which Jesus manifests supremely in this Holy Week. To the Manhood, a manhood as real as ours notwithstanding His union with the Father, the daily way seems both strange and difficult. From the time He sets out for the Passover Feast in Jerusalem, He can see nothing ahead of Him but inevitable ruin, terrifying catastrophe. At first He tells His followers that He will not go to the Feast at all; but then He knows that He must, and goes accordingly, albeit with sure provision of disaster. The coming defeat seems an odd fulfilment of a call to Messianic fulfilment. It is a curiously hard thing that for very goodness one must die. Yet step by step, with tragic certainty, we see

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

Him treading the inevitable path: to Bethany, to Jerusalem on the Day of the Palms, to the Last Supper, to the Garden, to the presence of the Sanhedrin, to Pilate's court, to Herod's palace, back again to Pilate, to the whipping pillar, along the Dolorous Way, to Golgotha, to arms stretched wide upon a shameful cross, to nails in hands and feet, to hours of agony, to horrid thirst, to spear-thrust in His side, to death. Well He knows at every instant both what is happening and what will happen next. Quite simply, in the midst of the Last Supper, Jesus said: "The Son of Man departeth from life in very truth, as it hath been determined."

Determined? That way of sorrow is the reward of perfect goodness? Is that determined? Nails for the hands that do good, and for the feet that tread to make other men happy? Ribald insult in return for kind words of wisdom such as no other can speak? Pain for Him who heals the sick? Thirst for Him who is Wine of the soul? Death for the Giver-of-life? Hilarious rejection for the perfect Lover? Are such things determined? Determined by whom?

Determined by God. That had become plain to Jesus in the silences of prayer. It is only by suffering borne, a suffering inflicted by those less perceptive, only by the laying down of a life in creative

NOTES OF THE PASSION

compassion, that power is released for the good of mankind. "Love them that love you?" Jesus once asked, "what good is that?" You get what you give and give what you get, and there is no profit gained, no power liberated. "Love your enemies. Pray for them that spitefully use you. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that persecute you. Thus are ye the sons of your Father which is in heaven." What He so plainly prescribed, He knew to be unalterably necessary.

That which is the common lot of all good men to do (or fail in), that the Master first must do, and do supremely well. He is prepared to suffer all things, even to sacrificial death. Always and for all men, and chiefly for the best, it is so determined by God. God knows the reason why. That is enough. Let the outcome justify the venture.

The Christ dies for us, creatively, sure that God requires it—and from His sacrifice flows strength to millions of souls. For His sake, in His power following Him, men and women, in all parts of the earth and in every generation, in turn lay down their lives, without reward or thanks or praise, because they know, as He knew, that by the doing of it one makes life to count. From Him and from those heroic souls comes power now to us; and if we lay

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

down our lives in some such way, hoping all things, enduring all things, our brethren yet to come will be the stronger, and the King will say, "Well done!"

So adequately to know all this that we do not cringe at pain, or break when met by ingratitude, or complain at treachery, or faint when threatened, but go right on: in order so to know, it is required of us, as it was of Him, that we have complete trust in God, that we do indeed believe.

How may a man come to believe in that fashion? Clear observation of the great and useful ones in past history may help. Reason, unable to find a satisfying moral system except in terms of willing sacrifice for God and our fellows, may help a little too. Any and every struggle we make towards right conduct and love of God, will be of assistance. But if we are ever to arrive at *complete* trust in God, we must ask for faith from God Himself. God must bestow that confidence as His free gift. We shall not of our own wit gain it. For faith we needs must pray. By faith, and only by faith, can we live and suffer and die as He lived and suffered and died. Without faith we shall stumble on in an increasing failure.

Ahead of us lies suffering and death. We have no choice about that. Our only choice is in this, whether it is to be suffering and death to no purpose or suffer-

NOTES OF THE PASSION

ing and death for God and the brethren. Jesus made that choice aright. Because He put His trust in the Father, He lived and died courageously, triumphantly. God help us, too, to make the lives we live—the suffering, the death that must come—to count for something. “Lord, increase our Faith!” Then shall we understand that what is appointed for us is not bad, but good; not empty tragedy, but creative. God will give to us, if we depend upon Him for it, strength to live, to suffer and to die like men; to serve and save, not by words alone but by what we, in our day, have been and borne. By the measure of our faith, we triumph. By the measure of our faith and what it can engender of high courage, we help the Christ to save a weary, stubborn, failing world.

3. THE NOTE OF JOY (WEDNESDAY)

How odd it is that anyone who has ever read the Christian records should regard the work men do in God, for Him and other men, the work which is at once religion and life, as a pale or sad or passive thing. From cover to cover, the Holy Bible is the record of a vigorously creative, almost an hilarious Deity. In that book there are men and women filled with woe, true enough; but their despair is because they have forsaken God. In the fullness of time the

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

God-man comes to earth to bear the pain caused by rejection, to win again from bitterness those who have to their sore hurt denied His way; but God is joyfully dynamic even in that agony of reconciliation. It is by energetic attack that He breaks the yoke of futility. There is nothing timid or defeated about Him. Nor in the Christian religion is there any such thing, as Jesus sends those who are His to redeem the world. He makes it possible for all that will it to have joy, creative joy, and live.

It is a pathetic misuse of Holy Week to spend our time in pitying Jesus. To do so betrays an almost hopeless misunderstanding of values! It is true that the sufferings of Jesus are horrid to contemplate—so terrible they are, and so undeserved. But He who endures them, while acquainted with grief, is not a grieving man. In the upper room on Thursday night, instituting the Sacrament, He says that He is full of joy; and He prays there for us that we may share that joy. Even then He knows full well that on the morrow there is in store for Him the pain, of body and of spirit, incident to the Cross. Yet He speaks of joy.

Let us not weep in pity for Him. His joy is to do the Father's will. He is fulfilling, greatly fulfilling, human destiny. He is a King among men. Never

NOTES OF THE PASSION

was He so kingly as in rejection, silent before His judges. Should a King defend Himself? And then, when Pilate is insistent, with his "Art thou a king, then?" Jesus at last replies with force of great simplicity: "I am. To this end was I born. For this cause came I into the world." It is a monarch who speaks, through lips cut from buffeting hands, while royal eyes look out from beneath a brow blooded by a crown of thorns. It is a King, and it is a joyful man. Let us weep not for Him, but for ourselves and for our children. Our joys, unlike His, are not enough, and so they fail us in the time of trial. No pity for Him. Admiration, yes, and adoration; but no pity. God help the one who pities Him, for by that very pity is the condemnation proved. He has no pity for Himself. This is a triumph at which we gaze, an apotheosis of manhood. He succeeds. It is we who fail. Would we gain joy, joy which exalts life from monotony to merriment, from languid tears to laughter, from near-despair to gaiety? There is a way that these things come to be. It is the way of the Cross.

In terms of what shall a man live if he is to be truly happy, if he is to fulfil his destiny? Are the answers of the world's poor wisdom adequate? Shall he be happy in terms of the search for wealth? We know the

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

inadequacy of that pursuit. We have seen too many persons who have had great possessions and been anything but happy; too many with few possessions whose lives have been joyful and their days triumphant. A rich man may perhaps become a happy man; but it is not riches that will have made him happy. A poor man may be a sad man; but it is not lack of wealth that will have made him so. Or shall we seek for happiness in terms of pleasure? That is a fool's philosophy, for appetite soon is sated and play-things grow tiresome. Shall we live in terms of power, seeking to find our joy in coercion—coercion by arms, coercion through finance, coercion by demagogic manipulation of the mob—seeking to impress our personalities upon posterity? We shall be gone hence to-morrow, our names forgotten by our own great-grandchildren. Let us not be wholly without a sense of humour. Or shall we live in vain pursuit of pale learning, divorcing knowledge from the warmth of love, abstracted pedants wearily searching for a meaning that the mind alone can never find? For these various things most people seem to live and labour; for wealth, pleasure, power and pedantry. For these they give their all, and find them not enough. If it is for these goods that we live, then our years are wasted, like rockets which soar and

NOTES OF THE PASSION

glow and fall at last, too soon, dead things, to earth. If these ends are all that we may pursue, life is not worth the pains it takes. Is there no other thing that a man may do with days and hours? Is there no hope of happiness for us, happiness that can last beyond to-morrow's sunset?

There is indeed. It lies, as always it has lain, in a life lived for the love of God and of God's children.

This problem of man's life is an old, old problem, even though it seem new to each on-coming generation. Wealth, pleasure, power and pedantry have always left men hungry of heart, even as now. Jesus the God-King has approached the disillusioned of all the centuries with the same message that now, in this Holy Week, He utters to us: "All things fail thee, O man? The world is not enough? Your strength is weakness? There is no joy that fades not? Come unto Me, O heavy-laden, you who dwell in the City of Confusion, you who are driven by the rush of futile days, for in Me, battered and torn, there is a strength the world knows not. Mine is a way of life along which are pools of water that do not fail. I shall give you a joy like My own joy." So Jesus speaks to men.

In Jesus on the Cross we see God at work, creating out of lesser clay the men and women He desires us

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

to be; His greatest wish that we may be possessed of unquenchable joy. There is about Him, in Him, gaiety. He offers to us, as to the happy ones of days gone by, a chance with Him to be gay and to enkindle joy in others. But before that last may be, it must become—that joy—a burning flame within ourselves. His is the gift of happiness. He knows where lie the springs of life.

Our generation would have it otherwise. We would deny and repeal the law of our own being. Therefore is life a disappointment. Therefore we destroy ourselves. Wealth-desire brings us near to economic collapse; men go astray in search of pleasures that degenerate into irksome and possessing license; the powers that would coerce, lay plans for "necessary war"; pure thinking grows abstract, divorced from love. We are self-impelled to the pursuit of ends that are less than human. We who insist that we must have our freedom, we are slaves. Meanwhile Lord Jesus, God and King and Lover, weeps. "Hadst thou but known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace! Now are they hid from thine eyes. The days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee." He who would be less than man, ends as

NOTES OF THE PASSION

nothing. They who have learned with God to love, joyfully to suffer and die for love, they alone can redeem the City of Confusion—at a great price.

The King is come to judgment. His throne is a Cross. His crown is of thorns. His countenance is like the lightning. His eyes are as a flame of fire. And the note in his coming is joy. Joy, though men deny you, hate you, scorn you! Joy, though the nails pierce hands and feet! Joy, triumphant over circumstance, which like a fire transfigures every lesser happiness! "I give you joy," He cries, "but at the necessary price for joy. Can you drink of this cup whereof I drink? If you will not drink of it, there is nothing before you but failure and corruption and the dung of death. But if you drink of it, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

When the Passion is over and Jesus dies, He will not have met defeat. The torn limbs, the wracked body, will rest within the cave tomb; but though hearts be failing us with fear at what our sinfulness has wrought, it is on ourselves and not on Him that doom will have been measured out—unless indeed we make of what He does our true redemption. When He bows His head and gives up the ghost, there will be no weeping in the courts of heaven.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

4. THE NOTE OF PEACE (THURSDAY)

In this Holy Week we are thinking about that passion which is the revelation by God both of His own nature and of man's potentialities. That passion constitutes the supreme event in history, wherein the limitations of our Time-Space order no longer obstruct, the instant when all the creative intensity of God breaks through, for man's invigoration. We have thought this week, first of all, of the simple homeliness in which God chose to reveal His nature, His love, His grace: the terms of our commonplace life, its trials and needs. Ours is a God clothed in flesh like our own, tempted in all points as we are, a God become human in order that we may understand and love Him. Next, we noted that the secret of this passionate redemption, and of all redemption, lies in glad obedience. Then, we tried to remember that in the drama of redemptive suffering, there is the note of undefeated and undefeatable joy. And now, what final aspect of the Passion shall we take for meditation?

It must be something pervasive, the deepest note of all. We are on the verge of the Cross itself. Soon we shall be looking on the Divine Agony.

All round the world, to-morrow, millions of the

NOTES OF THE PASSION

faithful will be keeping the day holy: people white, black, brown, yellow, red; poor people and wealthy, young people and old, good people and bad. Though the world be indeed corrupt and wicked, though the shouts of the godless sound in our ears, though we are in fear of the terror, we must never forget that there are still millions who have not bowed the knee to Mammon or to Moloch or to Astarte. We must not forget that every day the holy sacrifice of Calvary is pled before God in myriad prayers. We must never forget that at every single minute of every single day, somewhere upon the earth there are those representing, before the Infinite, the life and death of Jesus the Christ. He is indeed, even here on earth, unceasingly adored. Those millions of Christians who, like us, at least a little understand their Lord, to-morrow will be sanctifying themselves anew, by contemplation of their God and ours; sanctifying themselves, not alone for their own possible salvation but even more that they may the better, with their Master, serve and save, from disaster and despair unto sanity and joy, those other millions who as yet will have none of Him. We are not alone. To-morrow we shall be one with all that company, living and dead, who with Him bear the pain that follows human sin, and so redeem. How shall we, who with that great crowd

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

of witnesses would keep the Holy Day of God aright, *best* perceive the mood of the Passion?

Something ended there upon the Cross; and from that Something ended, came a new beginning. A new force was released, a force that engenders, in us who can understand, *a peace* of mind and spirit which nothing can disturb. Since the beginning of Christianity, they who have adored have known that by the Passion life is made well worth living, a triumphant good. In the City of Confusion there is for these a sense of order, souls freed from strain. Let tired nerves relax, and health long inhibited course within us. Let Jesus in His Passion bestow His greatest gift of all, the gift of *inner rest*.

What is this peace which He gives to them that are His? Certainly it is not a release from the necessity of struggle. He was careful to assure His followers about that. "In this world," He says, "you shall have tribulation." "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, because I have chosen you out of the world, the world hateth you." The peace that was in Jesus's own heart—and who that reads can avoid perception of that peace?—was not a serenity purchased by escape from the life of man as lived in the midst of an unredeemed Society. There were limita-

tions to His power to give peace. He could, indeed, command the waters of Galilee's lake, and say to the waves, "Peace: be still", and they obeyed Him; but peace to a humanity that desired no peace within, not even He could give. That limitation exists to-day. Part of Europe and much of Asia is aflame with war, and the rest of us are daily threatened with the same. He cannot save them who will not to be saved.

But the peace which He has to give, which most men will not have at His hand, is always available for them who will take it, even in the midst of a world at war. To bring that peace is the purpose of the Passion. Must all within Jerusalem perish? Then let the punishment fall first on Him, that peradventure His sacrifice may save some. In Him is peace, but not the sort of peace desired by the one that cried, "O had I wings as a dove! Then would I flee away into the wilderness and be at rest." His is a different and a better peace, the peace without which there can be no other peace.

Like those against whom Jeremiah prophesied, we have too long tried to heal the hurt of the people slightly, crying "Peace, Peace", where there is no peace. There can be no peace between peoples or races or classes, save as first men shall have found again their peace of soul. We ourselves can bring no

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

peace to others, except we first have known it, each in his own heart. Nor can that be, unless He give it us. With thought of that, His peace, let us take our places on Mount Calvary, with hope to understand.

VIII

BEHOLD THE MAN

(Good Friday)

VIII

BEHOLD THE MAN!

(Good Friday)

“**B**EHOLD the Man.”

With these words Pontius Pilate presented the bruised and beaten Jesus to the view of the multitude; and the multitude, gazing upon Him, in rejection cried, “Away with Him! Crucify Him!”; and it was done. He was in the world; and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own; and His own received Him not. They looked on Him, and had not wit to understand. They gazed upon the Light of the world, and cried, “Extinguish it.” It was before a judgment-seat that the Procurator of Judæa set Him forth and said, “Behold the Man.” Pilate thought, and the Sanhedrin thought, and the mob thought, that it was the Nazarene who was being judged; but it was not so. The Nazarene it was who stood as judge, He whose brow was bruised with thorns. It was Pilate, the Sanhedrin, the mob, who

were tried and found wanting, self-condemned and God-rejected.

That was a long time ago, and far away from here. Nineteen centuries have gone since the week which began with Hosannas and palm branches, and moved swiftly to the Garden of tears and the whipping post and "Behold the Man", and ended in the bitter Cross and a rock-hewn tomb. Pilate and Annas and Caia-phas and the rest of them, mighty or humble, rich or poor, knaves or fools or possibly only cowards—their bones are dust of the dust, and the only remembrance even of their names is in connection with Him they did to death, and their souls have received what reward or punishment the justice and mercy of their Victim may have given them.

It is an old, old story; nor would it be much worthy our remembrance if He who died had been only a man, who suffered once, judged once, died once. But this Jesus was no mere rejected soul of worth: no mere Lincoln shot for his good works, no mere Socrates drinking the hemlock, no mere martyr in a noble cause. Nor was what happened only an event in history, a thing once over and done. This was God, the Eternal Reality, who broke through the barrier that divides Eternity from our little world of time and space, the revelation of That Which Is in

BEHOLD THE MAN!

terms of man's own life. What happened is not merely something that happened. It is something which *everlastingly happens*. Holy Church is not asking us in Holy Week merely to recall the past, but rather to face the present. The kings and dictators and ministers of state to-day—they sit in Pilate's seat. The popes and prelates and chief preachers—their place is that of Annas, Caiaphas, and the rest of the Sanhedrin. And we—we are the mob. It is all of us who seem to judge, but are ourselves the judged. "Behold the Man." For good or ill, for weal or woe, for acceptance or rejection, for life or death, for Heaven or Hell, behold the Man! "Art thou a king then?" Jesus says, "I am; and behold you shall see the Son of Man come in the clouds of heaven." "What will ye shall be done with Jesus who is called the Christ?" This is the Day of the Passion. This is *the coming of the Lord*. This is the moment of Judgment. "Behold the Man!"

Jesus, Son of the Eternal God and child of Mary, is come into the world to show what is required if man is to triumph over circumstance, to endure earth's sorrows without being crushed by them; what one must do if he would rise to the stature of those who attain, with difficulty but with power, to immortality. He is come that He may give to us who

have confidence in Him an impartation of His own great strength. He is come to challenge us so daringly to live that we may never find life without flavour, dull to the taste. He is come to be a light to men and women in a dull and difficult world.

It is to an earth very much in darkness, a civilization perilously near to hysteria, a people not greatly removed from despair, that the Church gives to us once more the everlasting message of Jesus Christ crucified, this Light from Heaven who shines before mankind if only it has eyes to see and wit to understand. For many years this world of ours has, for the most part, refused to see the light lit by Incarnate God. We have relied on lesser lights, lit by our self-conceit. We have trusted that those lesser lights would be enough; and they are not enough. We grope in darkness, a darkness peopled by fearsome shapes beyond our understanding.

We have relied on Science; and it has revealed to us only strange mysteries which fail to explain our lives, our purpose and our destiny. That is not the fault of Science. Science was never competent to reveal the meaning of those lives, their purpose and destiny; but most of us have supposed it could do that. Now we find it cannot. We have trusted to invention; and the fruits of that invention, while

BEHOLD THE MAN!

sometimes they are in the hands of good men and do help us, are quite as often in the hands of wicked men who with them threaten our peace, our welfare, our very existence. We have trusted in machinery; and, put to service in a greedy social system, it has given us vast quantities of goods for the few while multitudes are in dire want. We have trusted in highly organized business; and it has condemned the masses to unemployment and the dole, and is now itself in danger of confiscatory destruction. We have said that man could be good without a God to obey; and he turns out to be, on a basis of enlightened self-interest, more and more a low-life, a crook, a murderous lunatic. We have abandoned self-discipline and restraint and gone in for self-expression, only to discover that the blatant and the crude rise up to destroy all values in a sea of noisy mediocrity. Our countries we would no longer entrust to God; and so now politicians, venal and cowardly, corrupt government, the willing slaves of any shouting mob. We forgot that God is king; and in His place we have acquired a fine group of demagogues, whose party names are vari-coloured cloaks for souls as like as peas, and most unlovely. We set out to promote world-harmony, first by bloody war and then by a peace built on selfish international bargains; and our

peace is but a paper peace, and guns boom again. In short, we godless modern people, who have been so sure that we were clever and self-sufficient, turn out to be great simpletons, socially destructive simpletons, self-destructive simpletons. It is *the fool* who has been saying in his heart, "There is no God!"

Yes, we have been playing the fool; and we pretty well know it. When anyone tries, to-day, to tell us that all is right with the good old world; that things are getting better and better; that, given a bit more of modern enlightenment, education, invention and scientific discovery, we shall have the millennium on earth and be happy as kings—we feel like saying to such a one, "Don't be silly. We know better than that." We are afraid. We feel ourselves in the grip of forces too strong for us. We no longer believe in ourselves, but have not yet learned again to believe in God. We drift with the tide, our hearts filled more and more with dread of what is coming on the earth. And our joy is gone, replaced by what is at worst a fruitlessly fretful discontent, at best rarely more than a cynical quiescence, content to make the best of a bad situation, with desire to be amused and to forget.

Yes, it is a dark world to which the Church this Holy Week proclaims of the Lord Christ: "He is a

BEHOLD THE MAN!

light to lighten the nations.” Ours is a dark world; and it is we who have made it dark—*we*, not God.

There are three absolutes in the nature of things as God made them, the pursuit of which alone makes life worth the living, a common pursuit of which alone makes Society secure. Those absolutes Plato called Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Those absolutes one may see incarnate in Lord Jesus—see them with challenging clearness in His Passion. He manifests Himself—in that Passion, in His Sacrament, in the lives of them that have been or would be His—and challenges us valiantly to pursue those Absolutes. But it is those Absolutes that man has forgotten. In the place of every one of the three, he has set up a shoddy substitute. We must away with these false and foolish caricatures. We can do this, if we will. We need not perish save by virtue of our own stupidity, save by an inability, self-induced, to distinguish between true metal and base counterfeit.

Behold the Man!

The pursuit of Truth! The tawdry substitute for that is conformity: to fashion, to crowd impulses, to loud advertisement. In the realm of things and in the realm of ideas, slogans are hammered at us day and night, until scarcely one of us remains master of his fate or captain of his soul. The manipulators of

publicity are rarely seeking truth, or the general welfare based on honesty, but rather each his own petty profits. More to-day than ever, it is true that what is fashionable is apt to be foolish or worse; that the more nationally advertised a thing may be, the less likely it is to be of superior quality; that the more generally talked about is a philosophy of life, the less it probably fits in with the facts. We must stop dancing to any tune that our cynical pipers care to play. To go with the crowd is no decent substitute for doing one's own thinking, praying, acting, as a creature responsible to the God of Truth.

Behold the Man!

The pursuit of Beauty! The substitute for that is indulgence in animal appetite, a self-expression that denies the necessity of ascetic restraint. Restraint is the prerequisite of beauty; selection, choice, elimination of the non-essential. Lives lived in an indulgence of every carnal appetite—actual indulgence or longed-for indulgence—do not make for beauty, but for riot, coarseness, ugliness, banality, noise, confusion without form and void! These are more and more the proper words to use in description of our civilization. And for the most part, they only too well describe contemporary human character. One still finds occasionally, to be sure, in every rank of society, some

BEHOLD THE MAN!

lives of dignity and charm—but how rare they are! and how those who live such lives are compelled to hide themselves away from their raucous, self-expressive brethren, from the hoodlum crowd that admires bawdy sex-appeal, applauds nakedness and vice, over-drinks, over-eats, over-shouts. When the lovers of beauty, seeking it by God's command, cry out against all this nearly incredible ugliness, they are hooted down as behind the times, or as precious prudes, or as anti-social Brahmins. Let us, then, cry out the more: "Woe unto you, men and women. You have murdered beauty, and the God of order and of loveliness draws near in judgment."

Behold the Man!

The pursuit of Goodness! The substitute for that is Greed. Goodness involves a possessing sense of commonwealth. The good man is always the man who lays down his life for his friends. There are not many people round about who seek to live that way. Each rather seeks, and is trained and encouraged to seek, his own security, his own prosperity, the safety and comfort of his own skin. Not everyone is so minded, thank God. There are still lovers, would-be servants of their kind. But they are in a minority, a dwindling minority. The cynical rapacity behind our present-day international intrigue, for instance, is

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

plain to anyone with eyes. And one has only to watch a session of any Parliament and observe its output of laws, to discover that almost all of them are only the result of bargains made between conflicting selfish interests—labour and capital, farmers and manufacturers, power producers and power consumers, and so on—each out for itself, no matter what happens to the commonwealth. And it is greed, too, that corrupts the family—greed for ease, for comfort, for sexual pleasure. The good life means to most people an easy and luxurious life, with me top dog, let the rest of the world go hang. That way lies racial decadence, economic chaos, and war. There will remain no peace, no social security, no decent homes, unless we know once more that God has made us for better things than grab and gain.

Behold the Man!

Truth is of God; conformity to fashion is our way. Beauty is of God; pursuit of animal appetite kills beauty and fills the world with horrid ugliness, of sight and sound and human character. Goodness is of God; greed comes straight from Hell, and leads men there. The darkness, brethren—never forget it—is not in the world of things about us. The darkness is in our own hearts. There lies the peril of mankind, the threat of ruin to the human race.

BEHOLD THE MAN!

The Light of men still shines, for all we fail to see it. Jesus came once, comes again, always comes, to live, to die, to triumph, to show to you and me, as once He showed to our forefathers, the things worth man's pursuit. Let a man but seek those things as ends, with Jesus's grace and power to help him day by day; and that man's darkness disappears. Let enough people be enlightened by Him, empowered by Him; and there will be no more war, no more dictatorships, no more degraded democracy, no more gross vulgarity, no more ruin to the life of man. Pursue not that which He reveals; and we shall grope our blind, sure way to woe! O mad, sad world to-day, behold the Man!

But you ask, it may be, will the City of Confusion ever turn from its God-forsakingness, its low conformity to advertised compulsions, the ugly crudeness of its untamed appetites, its man-consuming greed? Will the race kneel again before Lord Jesus, Incarnate God, and learn from Him humility? Will it do that in time to prevent war, chaos? I do not know. Possibly not. Possibly, as in many a catastrophe of time past, it is indeed chaos that is to be the inglorious ending to our present era. One hates to think so; but it well may be.

However, such a question is not the *primary* con-

cern for you, for me. The thing that matters, whatever may happen to civilization, is whether *you and I* are to live in terms of those things that are basic, for Him who has decreed that we may do His will and live, or refuse and perish. You and I, at least, may forsake the folly that calls itself modernity. We must, of course, deny no truth that man by Science has really discovered; but we can vigorously deny the current philosophy of life, which has nothing whatever to do with Science, though its proponents seek to hide under her skirts. We can repudiate the proud secularist cynicism of the current fashion, which degrades man and destroys his self-respect and threatens his very existence. You and I can turn our backs on that, for ever. Jesus still dwells in our temples, companies with us in every path, to be adored and received, to strengthen and enlighten the faithful. Behold the Man! Before that Presence we dare not be chiefly concerned, in some impersonal fashion, with what a world, a civilization, is going to do about Him, or about life. The thing that matters is: Are *you* yet willing to be taught of Him? Am *I*? Until you and I are converted, we cannot hope to strengthen our brethren, or to help restore the world to sanity.

“And Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do,

BEHOLD THE MAN!

then, with Jesus who is called the Christ? They say unto him, Let *him* be *crucified*. And the governor saith, Why? What evil hath he done? But they cry out the more, Let him be crucified. And Pilate saith, I am innocent of the blood of this just man; see ye to it. And then answer all the people and say, His blood be on us and on our children." *From the blood of God, shed by us, to our children's condemnation,—good Jesus Christ, deliver us from that!*

Behold the Man! In Him, who is the King, in Him who died but is not dead, the City of Confusion is become,—yes, even now—for them that understand and do believe, verily Jerusalem, City of Peace.

THE FULFILMENT

THEY found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre; and they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Remember how He spake unto you, when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words.¹

* * * * *

Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.²

* * * * *

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 2-8.

² 1 Corinthians xv. 20-22.

IN THE CITY OF CONFUSION

He that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God.¹

* * * * *

He showed me the great City, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. The City lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And the City had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light thereof; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.²

* * * * *

¹ Revelation xxi. 5-7.

² Ibid., 10-11, 16, 23-24, 27.

THE FULFILMENT

For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.¹

A^{MEN}, *Eternal God. Thy Kingdom come, as in heaven, so on earth.*

¹ Philippians iii. 20.



31 080 254

BV 85 Bell, Bernard
•B43 Iddings, 1886-
1938 1958.
 In the city of
 confusion,

BV 85 Bell, Bernard
•B43 Iddings, 1886-
1938 1958.
 In the city of
 confusion,

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



31 080 254